



Wellbeing Action and Research Initiative

Annual Report, 2023

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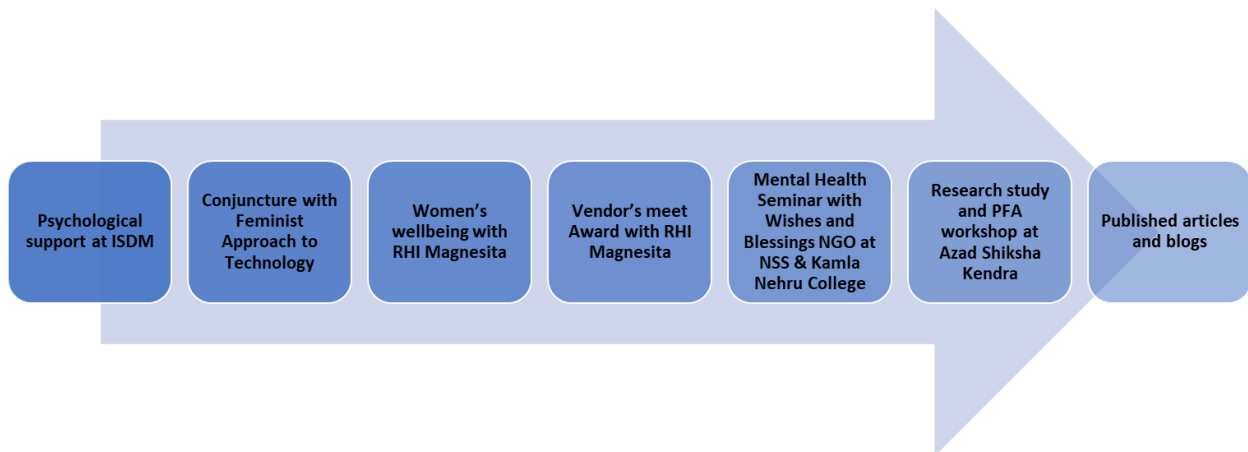
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About Wellbeing Action and Research Initiative

The founding team and advisors at *Well-being Action & Research Initiative* (WARI) is a group of individuals working in the domains of mental health, public health, social work and human resources for decades. We aim for breaking the stigma of seeking mental health services that have been long prevailing in the community, through a rights-based approach. We believe in increasing the accessibility of scalable well-being practice, care in communities and organizations. WARI is also involved in conducting action-based research on community-level to design well-being programs for building a culture of resilience and wellbeing.

At WARI, the year 2023 embraced a bundle of opportunities involving several social projects and corporate organizational projects aiming at delivering wellbeing to the collaborative organizations, making mental health accessible and a priority for all.

Projects undertaken in 2023



Counselling and Psychological support at Indian School of Development Management (ISDM)

Indian School of Development Management (ISDM) was founded in 2016 to establish the domain of Development Management as distinctly different from business management or public administration, to enable social purpose organizations to have impact at population scale. The aim was to develop the theory and practice of management in the social sector, with all its complexities, nuances and challenges, to unlock the full potential of SPOs to create a much greater and sustained impact. The extensive curriculum and numerous challenges makes it crucial to deal with complex emotions and experiences that a student goes through.

The Collaboration of ISDM and WARI is a professional conjunction aiming towards providing psychological support ensuring student well-being at every possible level. There is a crucial need for consistent and accessible psychological support for gracefully dealing with several of the issues faced by the young population that needs to be addressed at the right moment. Professionals from WARI lend unconditional and empathetic support to students, in order to ensure that they thrive emotionally, psychologically and professionally. Efforts were made to ensure that the development takes a holistic edge, and the students are ready to handle situations that life bestows upon them.

To ensure a holistic approach to wellbeing, a structured and a flexible approach was opted, embarking on the journey of wellness, awareness and care. Professionals from WARI curated workshops, student activities and individual sessions that enabled accessible support and guidance in the best possible manner. Some of the activities conducted are mentioned below.

Seminar on building mental health awareness

The awareness of mental wellbeing is often overlooked while touching upon the concept of holistic health.

Mental health is one of the most important and overlooked concept. The seminar held at ISDM was essentially aimed towards providing an explanation of mental health, which is a critical aspect of understanding, acknowledging, and supporting well-being. Goal was to spread awareness about mental illnesses, reducing stigma, and promoting access to resources and support for those experiencing mental health challenges.



Seminar began by a brief activity that involved imagery .The students were shown a range of colors and later were advised to close their eyes and imagine their most likable color from the presented colors and describe the associated feeling with that color. An overwhelming response and participation from the audience marked feeling comfort, warmth, fiery and a sense of connectedness from the color. The core aim of the particular activity was to build strong rapport that was essential for leading the discussion ahead.

Description of mental health model

The seminar moved ahead in the direction of discussing the mental health continuum. The mental health continuum is a model used to illustrate the spectrum of mental health, ranging from optimal well-being to severe mental health challenges. It emphasizes that mental health is not simply the absence of mental illness but rather a spectrum that individuals can move along, influenced by various factors.



The seminar involved students discussing their own experiences and nuances in life when the support was crucial, ranging to offering different perspectives and the current scenario of the staggering stigma around seeking help. The discussion brought up the on ground image of the need for psychological support and the precision which was required in providing the support. Nearing the end of the seminar, a short film was presented to the audience that was essentially to explain the power and importance of thought.

Building compassion and peer support through act

This student activity was conjecture of fun based learning that was primarily curated for enhancing the skill of providing support to every person one works with. The activity did provide an exposure to build compassion among the students that was essential for working in teams and building up the space for a cohesive work environment. During the activity, students were advised to form a circle and were instructed to imagine a ball of glass in their hand which held a meaningful value that they would give to their fellow mates. It was ensured that every student gets the turn to receive and pass the ball.



On the completion of the activity, feedback was taken from the students and they were asked how the activity made them feel. From the verbal feedback received, it was reflected that the activity allowed them to introspect on the most important value that they could give to their colleagues and fellow mates. The activity made them feel compassionate about their coworkers and imbibed a sense of togetherness in the organization. The activity also aided towards building positive relationships and feelings for the coworkers in the sense of wishing them the value that they cherish.

Individual Student Counselling sessions at ISDM

From the very beginning of the academic year 2023, every student was new to the environment of their educational institute ISDM. A lot of them came leaving their families for the very first time and some students experienced difficulty in transitioning from their previous work life to pursue education further.

They were challenged with feelings of incompetence and under-confidence within themselves and for some it was the emotional upheaval that came from romantic relationships.

The need for professional support was a must for the addressing these issues that could become a hurdle in their path of growth. The professionals from WARI extensively provided their support through regular psychological sessions and follow ups to every student at ISDM, for maintaining and providing eclectic therapeutic aid.

Student Feedback Form: ISDM Counselling and Psychological Support

For every student at ISDM the counselling sessions were conducted and it was followed by feedback form at the end of the year. It was done to understand their experiences with the counselling and psychological support services by WARI professionals. Certain parameters were absorbed involving consistency, clarity and resolution of the problem.

The respondents varied in the age parameters, gender and cultural and social background which gave a touch of variety on responses that added value to the feedback.

- The feedback questions inquiring about their consistency in providing sessions and regular follow up, received an affirmative response bringing up the numbers to 85% responses in favor of receiving consistent support for the students.
- On the questions inquiring about the usefulness and applicability of the solutions provided during the sessions, 88% of the total respondents agreed and affirmed that the strategies and solutions provided during the sessions helped them in coping with their life challenges and provided a safe and successful get away from their struggles .

For providing their views in exact phrases describing their experiences of sessions, some of the students (name kept anonymous for confidentiality) mentioned *“Satjyot was always professional in helping me with my concerns. She was also able to create a personal bond with me that helped in opening up to her”*. Another mentioned about the care and consistent support. One student mentioned *“Happy or Sad, Satjyot is always there!”*.

The valuable feedback from students at ISDM for WARI support aided in the growth of the organization in a fruitful direction and paved the way for essential growth. The feedback essentially reflected that the students felt that they were heard and gave them the much needed clarity in understanding themselves and their emotions, which helped in relieving and coping them from their stress and emotional upheavals.

Collaboration with Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT)

Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT) is a not-for-profit organization established in 2008 and primarily operates in Delhi, Pune, Jharkhand & Bihar. It has a network of community collectives led by young

women, working together for sustainable development, equality and equity in their communities, through a feminist approach to technology.

An aspiration of becoming and attaining highest potential, requires a bundle of inner strength and emotional resilience, which takes a lot of time and effort in the right direction. A conjunction with WARI aided in the journey of independence by providing their consistent support to employees and team members of FAT through wellbeing sessions , individual one to one counselling sessions and workshops. Laying the path for development and creating the space for self-discovery, the tie -up of WARI and FAT was a successful approach to feminism and equality.



Working with people across all age groups has tremendously helped in developing as an organization, which propelled in applicability of several dynamic and creative approaches for establishing a strong base for mental health.



Cherishing health with Care and creativity

Women’s Wellbeing with RHI Magnesita

RHI Magnesita is the global leader in refractories, with the largest number of locations around the world adopting an innovative approach in production and services involving quality security. The collaboration of WARI and RHI Magnesita entangled a fruitful journey of women’s wellness sessions hosted by Ms. Satjyot Gill on the pretext of International Women’s Day, 2023.



The conjunction gave an honored opportunity to work towards the wellbeing and prioritizing mental health at the workplace. With an intention of celebrating the strength and resilience of all the incredible women, it was not just about wellness and inspiration but also about having the courage to stand up for self and shine.



Ready to shine with Wellness

Workplace vendor meet Award by RHI Magnesita

WARI is immensely honored and grateful to receive the prestigious award. This recognition is a testament to the dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment that has driven the vision of making mental health accessible to all. It is a humbling experience to be acknowledged among such esteemed peers and professionals. WARI team extend their heartfelt thanks to the committee for this incredible honor and to all those who have supported and believed in the teamwork of WARI throughout this journey. This award received at RHI Vendor meet serves as a



powerful reminder of the importance of perseverance and the boundless possibilities that await with determination and hard work. We are truly privileged and motivated to continue striving for innovation and contributing positively to the community and industry.

WARI professionals were delighted for the invitation and being the recipient of the award for their crucial role in wellness programs focusing and prioritizing mental health at the workplace and establishing a shared experience of joy, peace and harmony. The vision behind the successful journey of WARI and RHI Magnesita was a workplace where mental health was a top priority, and a space that recognized and valued the importance of mental well-being as integral to overall employee health. It is a world where stigma surrounding mental health is eradicated, replaced with empathy, understanding, and open conversations.

Mental Health Seminar with Wishes and Blessings NGO at NSS & Kamla Nehru College

Wishes and Blessings is a not-for-profit organization that is a unique platform for helping the underprivileged. The organization aims to spread blessings and fulfill wishes by linking beneficiaries with donors. Wishes and blessings work across the spectrum of society surpassing age and gender barriers on diverse causes including education, health, skill development and relief. Founder and President of Wishes and Blessings Dr. Geetanjali Chopra emphasized the need to shed light on the complexities of mental health and its pervasive impact on society and for standing up for the cause. On the occasion of World Mental health Day, professionals from WARI; Ms. Satjyot (founder & senior psychologist), Ms. Shehnaaz (clinical psychologist) and Ms. Nandini (counseling psychologist) were invited to Kamla Nehru College, Delhi University for the seminar on mental health.

The seminar's principal objective was to raise awareness about mental health issues, aiming to combat the casual use of terms like "trauma" and "depression" and dispel common misconceptions regarding the expected behavior of individuals facing these challenges. The seminar also served as a



platform for open discussions, encouraging attendees to ask questions, share their thoughts, and learn from the experiences of others and have the space of bringing up the change at community level.

Research Study at Azad Shiksha Kendra

Azad Shiksha Kendra (ASK) is a registered not-for-profit organization working with the marginalized communities in Indian states of Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Kashmir since 2004. The main aim of ASK is to spread rights - based awareness, education and advocacy in the marginalized community. The organization also runs specific programs for women rights and protection.

WARI and Azad Shiksha Kendra collaborated and came together to organise a mental health and wellbeing workshop and later a psychological first aid workshop, facilitated by Ms. Naghma, Ms. Satjyot (Co-founder of WARI) and Ms. Nandini (psychologist) to bring in the sensitivity and awareness towards providing mental health support and care amongst the participants and ASK facilitators. PFA involves humane, supportive and practical assistance for people who are distressed, in ways that respect their dignity, culture and abilities (World Health Organization, 2013). The workshop touched upon several sensitive yet staggering mental health issues in domestic areas and aided in providing appropriate training and psychoeducation to tackle such issues at hand. The activities that were conducted during the study were:

Picture story activity

A picture story is an exercise wherein participants are shown a black and white sketch / drawing and asked to describe a story based on it. The idea behind the same is to bring out the participant's thought process and perceptions related to a particular incident that she or he could relate to. We all have unconscious thoughts and urges and this exercise was intended to uncover feelings, desires and conflicts that are hidden from conscious awareness.

In this activity, the participants were able to relate to the pictures shown in different ways. The reflections were a mix of fear, loss, pain, suffering, violence, discrimination, disharmony, loneliness, love, care, friendship, community presence and taking a stand in society.

Focused group discussion

A focused group discussion (FGD) is a research method used where in discussion and insights could be captured on the area of interest. It involves gathering of people from similar backgrounds or same types of experiences to come together to discuss a specific topic of interest. It is a form of qualitative research where enquiries are made about the participant's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, opinion or ideas. FGD was held to create a space for the ASK participants to discuss the issues affecting their wellbeing amongst themselves.

The FGD exercise consisted of discussions over a series of questions. The outcome of the discussions were a set of enhancing and detrimental factors that affected their individual lives as well as impact the community as a whole.

The Wellbeing Survey

A survey was designed to understand the wellbeing of the participants, the challenges they face in different domains of their life, what all measures they adopt, what services are accessible and available to them. The data from the survey was also meant to add to the data that was collected from the FGDS. In the survey 5 main components of Wellbeing were explored which were physical, psychological, social, intellectual and financial, for the participants ranging from age 17 to 70 years.

Analysis of the wellbeing survey

The analysis of the Wellbeing survey summarized:

- For almost all the participants there was a set of happy memories they could reflect onto which consisted of few different types of situations.
- There were several domains of life where the participants faced numerous challenges which mostly involved family and work life.
- Out of the 5 domains of wellbeing, most of the participants felt that physical wellbeing was primary followed by psychological wellbeing.
- The survey also highlighted the importance of stability in their current jobs, which was the major cause of worry in daily schedules, which also impedes their mood and functionality.
- The survey marked up daily difficulties in regulating mood and constant work pressure.

Psychological First Aid workshop at Azad Shiksha Kendra

The findings from the previous workshop conducted by WARI at ASK in March 2023 stated several factors in the ASK community exist that need to be addressed with a cohesive and holistic approach aiming the upliftment of the society as a whole. The support from society at large is vital as well as crucial to create a space for wellbeing and prosperity of all. Providing accessible care and Psychological First Aid is crucial to aid the space for growth and resilience towards social determinants of wellbeing with utmost care. According to ACPMH, (2009) Psychological first aid is a ‘humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support’. This approach involves helping people to feel safe, connected to others, calm and hopeful, access physical, emotional and social support, and feel able to help themselves. The Psychological First Aid workshop at ASK included of the following activities:

- The session began with a brief introduction from the ASK members, participants and WARI facilitators, to bring in the comfort of knowing each other and forming a cohesive place for interaction. WARI facilitators Ms. Satjyot, Ms. Nagma and Ms. Nandini began introducing themselves and paved the way for further interaction with ASK members.
- Centering, a mindfulness - based exercise that can support in retaining focus, promoting relaxation and relieving anxiety (American Psychological Association, 2022) was conducted. The activity was primarily intended to make participants comfortable, to know their opinions around

what they wanted to learn from the session and understanding their current level of awareness and sensitivity towards such situations.

- For the purpose of training, the group discussion was held explaining about the Psychological First Aid. Taking the discussion ahead, the concepts of mental health were touched upon, a clear operational definition of mental health and wellbeing was explained along the parameters of mental illness. A range of psychological disorders were also mentioned through the activity and the social, economic and emotional factors that influence the wellbeing of an individual were classified.
- To create a space for interactive discussion, the facilitators asked the ASK participants about how they perceive mental illness and what are the signs and symptoms they know which can depict mental illness. The facilitators mentioned the symptoms of mental illness in daily routine, the dissonance at Affect, Thought and Behavioral level that can be caused by familial/ social, occupational or financial stressors. The ASK participants expressed that stressors involving their familial and financial situations were the most prominent leading factors for their distress.
- A case study activity was taken up that depicted the story of three individuals in certain mental health conditions, and in order to facilitate an interactive discussion, the participants were divided to form three groups and all three groups were given the particular case study. Further, the task was to determine the categories of mental health continuum in which the cases lie with justifying reason for the answer. The intent behind this activity was to clarify the concept at a practical level to aid real life skills.
- The case study activity got valuable insights from the ASK participants. The insights from the group reflected a very structured way of interaction and arriving at a conclusions for all the three case studies.
- To enhance the skills and for better retention of the learning from the workshop, an arrangement of video clip based on Mental health and wellbeing was made for the ASK members and participants. The clip displayed the alarming behavioral changes that could be used to predict mental health of an individual. The facilitators mentioned the need to be aware of the signs that could be used as predictors of mental health deterioration which are changes in sleep, appetite, behavior and mood fluctuation. They also educated the ASK members and participants, the need to be aware and sensitive towards these signs, which could be alarming factors.
- The entire process of training went smoothly and fervently; however, it was essential to take feedback nearing the end of the session. Certain insights were revealed. The participants expressed that they felt that attending the workshop was a novel experience for them and described that they felt welcomed at the group meeting and a sense of belongingness from the group. They also expressed their wish for more such workshops that can help them grow as capable individuals to aid the development in the community

Research Initiatives by WARI

For creating an extensive understanding of wellbeing and exploring its current presence in the society, a case study based research by Ms. Satjyot Gill (founder of Wellbeing Action and Research Initiative) and Binu Sundas (Assistant Professor at Miranda House) was proposed, titled as “Ideating Wellbeing: A Case Study of an Organisation in Delhi”. The outcome of the research gave different perspectives on the perception of Wellbeing in different situations and phases of life. It is looked at from various perspectives, as well as different definitions and understanding of it has been formulated. In times of uncertainty caused by the pandemic many people are losing their jobs and security. This in turn started affecting their physical and mental wellbeing and therefore it has now become essential for organizations to understand it. It is required not as a top-down approach but from a bottom-up approach for the success and smooth functioning of the organizations. Understanding wellbeing from a gender perspective has become more important as women’s experiences of wellbeing differ from that of men. This research looks at both the psychological as well as socio-economic perspectives. It is based on a survey conducted among the employees of an organization and focus group discussion. From the detailed analysis of the discussions, it was concluded that in order to attain the goal of wellbeing in an organization, the presence of constant individual counselling sessions as well as a regulated body for group wellbeing is crucial, and essential for a holistic growth of an organization (Gill S. & Sundass B., 2023).

Blogs and Professional articles

The need for spreading awareness through one platform is never sufficient. The benefit of getting the support from social media and the internet that aids in sharing and addressing important issues, struggles from a psychological perspective and providing aid through the means of articles and blogs is marvellous. The articles published by founder Ms. Satjyot on father’s day titled “Father's Day 2023: Mental health tips for single dads”, addressing and sharing tips on single parenting was published in Hindustan Times. Another article titled “How to stop worrying about what others think” was published on the online platform [onlymyhealth](#).

Summary

This year's report highlights the strides made in de-stigmatizing mental health issues, promoting awareness, and improving access to vital mental health services. It is evident from the data that efforts to prioritize mental health have yielded positive outcomes in various sectors including education, corporates and social welfare sector.

WARI envisions that mental health services becomes accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status, ensuring that unconditional support is available and accessible to all. We believe that mental health is not just a reaction to crisis but a proactive and continuous effort, with individuals, communities, and

institutions collaboratively building a world where mental well-being is cherished as an essential component of a thriving, compassionate, and equitable society.

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