

School psychologists and mental health of CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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THE concept of school psychologists is not well known in Bangladesh. Although in recent years we have been able to bring the issue of mental health to the fore, making provisions for having psychologists in school is still uncharted territory for us. Given the work they do and the impact their work has on the mental wellbeing of children and youth, it is of utmost importance that we start educating ourselves, the policymakers, and stakeholders about this profession.

Although the profession has not yet been mainstreamed in our part of the world, currently around 100,000 school psychologists are working in more than 48 countries including the US, Spain, Canada, Japan, Turkey, etc. As a licensed school psychologist, my aim in writing this article is to introduce the profession, and its practitioners, to the readers and to explain briefly who they are, what they do, and why it is important that we develop this field as a specialised professional area in Bangladesh.

Importance of the Field
School psychology is an offshoot of functional psychology that is concerned with the science and practice of psychology with children, youth, families, learners of all ages and the educational process. School psychologists are professionals who can help children and young people achieve success academically, socially, behaviourally, and emotionally. They can also advocate for the rights of children and youth with disabilities as well as assist parents and caregivers become better informed and stronger advocates for their family members.

The work of school psychologists enable schools and other institutions to successfully: improve academic achievement; promote positive behaviour and mental health; support diverse learners; create safe and positive school climates; strengthen family-school partnerships; and improve school-wide assessment and accountability.

There are a myriad of problems which can be faced by children and youth related to learning, social relationships, complex

decisions, managing emotions, etc. They can suffer from depression, anxiety, worry or isolation. School psychologists can come into play in such situations by understanding and resolving the short-term and long-term issues and problems faced by the children and youth. They are a key medium for understanding how such issues affect learning, behaviour, wellbeing and educational engagement.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), school psychologists provide a range of psychological diagnosis, assessment, intervention, prevention, health promotion, programme development and evaluation services with a special focus on the developmental processes of children and youth within the context of schools, families and other institutions. They intervene at the individual and system level, and develop, implement and evaluate preventive programmes. They conduct ecologically valid assessments and promote positive learning environments for the healthy development of children and youth.

Ambit of Work
The primary responsibilities of school psychologists include:

- Undertaking comprehensive assessments to diagnose intellectual ability, learning processes, academic skills and aptitude, social skills, emotional functioning, behavioural problems, and neurological processes
- Consulting with parents, teachers, administrators, paediatricians, psychiatrists, neurologists and therapists
- Developing behavioural intervention plans, individual education plans, prevention programmes (for instance against violence, bullying, truancy and dropouts) and alternatives to corporal punishments
- Advocating for the rights of children and their families
- Conducting training for parents, teachers, and other professionals and imparting training on social skills
- Coordinating services existing in the community
- Researching
- Counselling

Apart from the primary responsibilities



enumerated above, alternate roles of school psychologists can vary from society to society and may include, administration, curriculum development, advising with legislation and policy development, crisis intervention and victim assistance.

School psychologists can be typically seen working in public and private schools,

universities, school-based health and mental health centres, community-based day-treatment or residential clinics and hospitals, juvenile justice centres and even in private practice. School psychologists work for, and together with students, parents, teachers, paediatricians, neurologists, school administrators, community service providers,

social workers and therapists.

Attributes and Qualifications
The attributes necessary for a school psychologist include principally, knowledge on psychology and education, usually satisfied by relevant postgraduate studies. They should have an understanding and respect for human diversity. They should be able to deliver a comprehensive range of direct, measurable services for children, families and educational institutions. Given the complexity of their responsibilities and the particular sensitivities associated with the mental health sector, appropriate training is also a prerequisite.

Although the specific areas of training for school psychologists will vary from country to country, as an example, we can look at the knowledge and skills required by such professionals in USA as prescribed by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP): data collection and analysis; assessment; progress monitoring; school wide practices to promote learning; resilience and risk factors; consultation and collaboration; interventions; instructional support; crisis preparedness, response and recovery; collaborating between families, schools and communities; diversity in development and learning; research and program evaluation; professional ethics, applicable laws and systems.

As the above discussion sets out, school psychologists can play a crucial role in supporting the ability of children and youth to learn and succeed academically, socially, behaviourally and emotionally. By partnering with families, teachers, educational institutions and other stakeholders, they help create safe, healthy and supportive learning environments. It, therefore, goes without saying, that the introduction of school psychologists in the schools and educational institutions in Bangladesh would be a very positive move towards the healthy mental development of our children and youth.

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Economics and Emotions



AMITAVA KAR

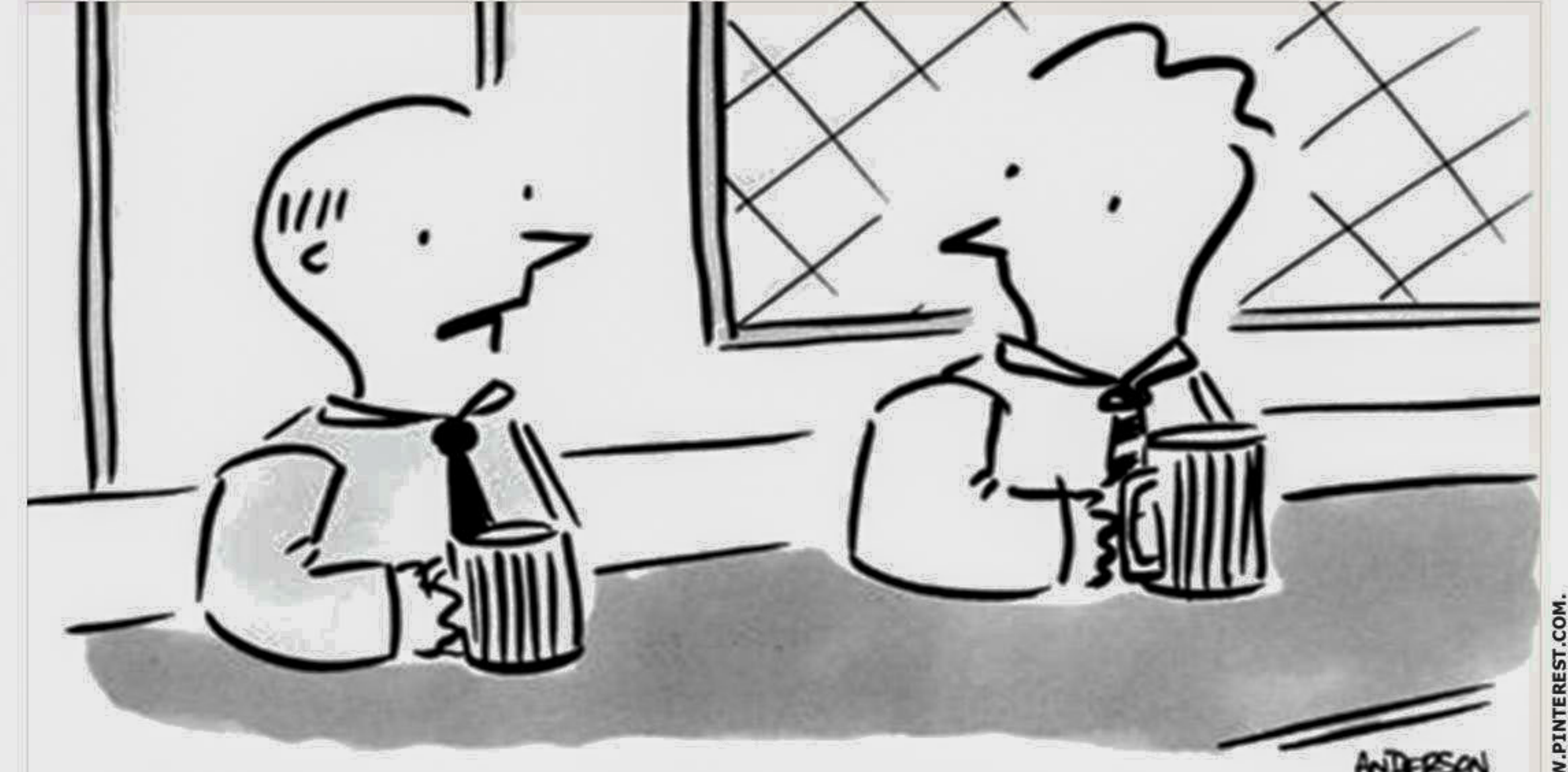
THE hackneyed expression "strictly business" would have us believe that business, at its core, is meant to be devoid of emotion. Anyone who has managed or worked in a team or negotiated a business deal knows that this could not be further from the truth. The prevailing wisdom says that difficult thoughts and feelings have no place at work and people, especially, managers should always be stoic, projecting confidence. But that goes against basic biology. Anyone who has dreamed of a burger and French fries while following a strict diet understands this phenomenon.

Emotion is an inextricable aspect of the business world. The trick is learning how to manage it. That's where *emotional intelligence*—the ability to reason with and about emotions to achieve goals—comes in.

The concept is not new - how people manage themselves and relate to others is central to classic management theories. What's new is the data: There now exists at least 20 years' worth of empirical studies that tell us with precision just how much it matters for success.

The term emotional intelligence (EI) was first popularised in a 1995 book of the same name by US psychologist Daniel Goleman. Since then, numerous studies have demonstrated that EI matters twice as much as one's IQ or technical knowledge for achieving outstanding performance at work.

Everyone has an inner stream of thoughts and feelings that include insecurity, doubt, jealousy and fear. The trouble arises when we get hooked by these internal chatters and allow them to complicate our decision-



"It's sorta good news and bad news. The airline lost my emotional baggage."

making process. In the complex, fast-changing knowledge-based global economy, it is necessary for managers and employees to have the ability to stop that from happening.

Ample research shows that emotional intelligence can help us relieve stress, reduce errors, become more efficient and innovative, and create organisational values. Our thought stream flows endlessly, and emotions change like the weather, but values can be called on

in any situation in order to achieve shared goals like better quality or efficiency.

Work is emotionally challenging. The security and comfort of relationships are interrupted - we are surrounded by hundreds or thousands of peers who know nothing about who we are as persons. Some new recruits may bring with them unresolved interpersonal difficulties from college days or family life, which complicates their

adjustment to the new environment. On a deeper level, these are unexpected challenges to their identity.

The rules for work are also changing. "These rules have little to do with what we were told was important in school; academic abilities are largely irrelevant to this standard," Daniel Goleman writes in his best-selling book. "The new measure takes for granted having enough intellectual ability and

technical know-how to do our jobs; it focuses instead on personal qualities, such as initiative and empathy, adaptability and persuasiveness."

There's, however, certain common misunderstanding about the idea. Being emotionally intelligent is not the same as "being nice." It also does not mean giving free rein to feelings—"letting it all hang out." Rather, it means managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively.

And unlike IQ, which changes little after our formative years, studies show that, emotional intelligence can be learned and it continues to develop as we grow more adept at handling our own emotions and impulses, at motivating ourselves, and at honing our empathy and social adroitness. An ongoing education in emotions from kindergarten through university and training programmes for professionals based on the emerging field of emotion science can be helpful in this regard.

Emotional intelligence is no passing fad or the management nostrum of the moment. The reason it needs to be taken seriously is simply because it works and there is data to back it up. In some countries, even medical schools are incorporating emotional intelligence into their training of doctors. Many companies in Singapore train managers on EI so that they can cope with diversity at the workplace.

According to a senior professor of a prestigious business school, companies here are more concerned about IQ; they do not care much about EI. People at managerial levels must have some exposure to emotional intelligence, he opines.

We need to wake up to the reality that business is done by people and for people. And people are emotional beings.

The writer is an engineer-turned-journalist.

A WORD A DAY

SYZYGY
[siz-i-jee]

The alignment of three celestial bodies in a straight line, commonly the earth, the sun and the moon.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Form
- 6 Stylish
- 11 Breaks, in a way
- 12 Sports official
- 13 Track legend Jesse
- 14 Foe
- 15 Hole number
- 16 Servant for taverns, e.g.
- 18 Clock numeral
- 19 Sweet tuber
- 20 Mammie's mate
- 21 Pleasant
- 23 Pound parts
- 25 Contented sound
- 27 Narc's org.
- 28 Pays to play
- 30 Savvy about
- 33 "Well, that's obvious!"
- 34 Weaver's creation
- 36 Fancy vase
- 37 Pizza herb
- 39 Tipsy
- 40 "... and -- a good night"
- 41 Led Zeppelin's "Whole Love"
- 43 Blundered

DOWN

- 1 Visit briefly
- 2 Mauna Loa Setting
- 3 Jeff Bridges film
- 4 Farm enclosure
- 5 School paper
- 6 Ticked off
- 7 Chinese dynasty
- 8 Jesse Eisenberg film
- 9 2014's "Godzilla," for one
- 10 "Go ahead, ask"
- 17 Snooze
- 22 Have something
- 24 "The Matrix" hero
- 26 Pro-claims
- 28 Dawn goddess
- 29 Day light
- 31 More hackneyed
- 32 Focused at work
- 33 Was quite fond
- 35 Plays a round
- 38 Merriment
- 42 Granola bit

Yesterday's answer

F	A	K	E	S	P	A	I	N
A	L	E	S	S	T	A	N	C
U	S	E	S	P	A	S	T	E
N	O	N	E	V	E	N	T	
N	O	N	D	A	I	R		
E	L	I	C	I	T	L	I	E
D	I	C	E	D	S	A	L	S
E	M	O	M	E	S	S	E	S
N	O	N	S	T	I	C	K	
N	O	N	T	O	X	I	C	
M	I	L	A	N	O	V	E	R
E	V	O	K	E	S	E	N	O
T	Y	P	E	S	R	A	N	T

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

I. JUST COULDN'T GET BEETLE OUT OF BED THIS MORNING

9-14

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

KICK! KICK! STROKE! STROKE!

YOU'VE GOT IT, ZOE!

NOW, DO THAT IN THE POOL.

ARE YOU KIDDING?

IT'S FULL OF WATER!