

THE LIMINAL MIND

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RESEARCH WITHOUT THE CHAOS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO RESEARCH METHODS & ACADEMIC WRITING

The Department of Psychology, Sacred Heart College (Autonomous), Thevara, organised a workshop titled “Research Without the Chaos: A Practical Guide to Research Methods & Academic Writing” on 17 December 2025, from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM at Fr. Dan Thottakara Hall, in collaboration with UPLIVO, a startup that supports individuals involved in research and academic work.

The session was led by Dr. Aleena P. Mathew, Assistant Professor at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences. Drawing from her academic experience, she explained key research concepts in a clear and accessible manner. The workshop focused on simplifying the research process by discussing the purpose of research and essential steps such as topic selection, problem formulation, setting objectives, and choosing appropriate research methods.

A significant portion of the workshop was dedicated to academic writing. Common writing errors were addressed, with emphasis on clarity, logical structure, proper referencing, and maintaining originality. Practical tips were shared to help students improve coherence and flow in academic writing.

The programme was interactive, allowing participants to actively engage, ask questions, and clarify doubts related to research design and writing. The session was encouraging and informative, offering practical insights based on real academic experiences.

Overall, the workshop was well-organised and beneficial, enhancing participants’ understanding of research methods and improving confidence in academic writing. The collaboration between the Department of Psychology and UPLIVO added practical value, making the programme relevant and impactful.

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“CONNECTION” – A FUTURE-READY INITIATIVE ON HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

The Post Graduate Department of Psychology, Sacred Heart College (Autonomous), East Campus, successfully organized a futureready student initiative titled “CONNECTION” on Tuesday, 16 December 2025, at 2:00 PM in Fr. Aggaeus Hall. The program was conducted in collaboration with Manorama Online and m4marry.com, aiming to create awareness among students about relationship dynamics in contemporary society.

The session focused on crucial themes such as toxic relationships, characteristics of healthy relationships, emotional boundaries, and coping with breakups. Given the increasing psychological distress related to interpersonal relationships among young adults, the program addressed timely and relevant concerns faced by students today.

The session was led by Dr. Vipin Roldant, M.A. M.Phil. (Psychology), PhD, a Senior Consultant Psychologist, Performance Coach and Corporate Trainer. He provided deep insights into how unhealthy relationship patterns develop, the psychological impact of emotional toxicity, and the importance of self-awareness and emotional regulation. Dr. Roldant emphasized the significance of healthy communication, mutual respect, and emotional maturity in sustaining meaningful relationships.

The session was highly interactive, with students actively engaging through questions and reflections. Practical strategies, real-life examples, and psychological tools shared during the program made the session relatable and impactful. The “CONNECTION” initiative was well-received by the student community as an enriching platform for fostering emotional intelligence and relationship awareness.

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INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH

It will be harder to find a person who doesn't use social media in this 21st century. It has become an integral part of our lives, as it should be. Social media has become a major platform for people from different walks of life, and plays a key role in connecting them all. It is an important aspect of our lives, being a main source of information, fostering social connections, raising awareness, serving as a space for creativity and self-expression.

However, we cannot talk about the good parts while turning away from the bad. While social media plays a key role in bringing positive changes in many people's lives and has allowed to support

people and communities by spreading awareness and opportunities, it has also played a vital role in doing the opposite.

Since it is primarily used for communication by people, human errors and emotions also come into play while giving out information. We come across a lot of fake news and misinformation on the daily, and it takes a level of digital maturity and logical thinking to differentiate between facts and fiction. The believed fiction can adversely cause panic and anxiety to the uninformed folk, especially with the recent and alarming rise of AI technology.

The use of AI in modern social media has been quite prevalent and is easily accessible to the common folk as well. While that is a good thing, with the resources being available for everyone alike, the things it is primarily used for, such as editing and creation of fake images that are then used for blackmailing and cyberbullying, ends in pretty much the way you would imagine it to.

The human mind has a tendency to focus more on the negative aspects of life. As a result, social media has become a platform for spreading misinformation, biased content and unrealistic portrayal of lifestyles.

This can cause harm to both the creator and the audience, as the creator has to struggle to keep up with the demands of the masses, while the audience tries to imitate and conform themselves into a person very similar to the creator, as seen in our current age of influencer culture. This can cause an identity crisis, especially in highly impressionable teenagers, who are still in their stages of cognitive development, and can cause them to fall into depression and issues with their bodies and self-esteem which in turn can have disastrous consequences.

Moreover, ironically, the same place where insecurities and bullying can stem from can also be a breeding ground for faux activism, i.e, being highly sensitive to negativity to the extent of seeing it when it isn't there. We can see this mainly in platforms like X (previously Twitter), where a simple wholesome post can be twisted and argued upon. This phenomenon, called 'negativity bias', can induce anxiety and a pressure to perform according to standards, which keep on changing day by day.

These are just some amongst the several problems that are caused as a result of social media. Cyber bullying, decline in socialization, addiction, and exposure to harmful content prematurely are some of the other major issues regarding negative social media usage.

While it can throw light to several prominent issues in our society, it is important to remember that at the end of the day, it is a tool for communication and should be taken at face value and not be blindly followed. As conscious users, we need to be aware of our own mental status while using these platforms, and make mature decisions while interacting, and work together to make these platforms a safe environment for everyone.

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FAILING TO STICK TO YOUR NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS? TRY THE WOOP METHOD !!!

Many people make 'New Year Resolutions' hoping to improve their life and mental health. The beginning of a new year feels like a fresh start, which increases motivation and optimism, as said by Dai (et al., 2014). However, when resolutions fail, people often feel guilty, disappointed, and emotionally exhausted. Psychology suggests that failure is often due to unrealistic goal-setting rather than a lack of willpower. Psychologist Gabriele Oettingen explained that only imagining a positive future is not enough to create real change. Her 'Fantasy-vs-Reality' theory shows that positive fantasies can reduce effort if obstacles are ignored. When people imagine success without thinking about difficulties, their brain feels relaxed, as if the goal is already achieved. This can lead to giving up on resolutions, which negatively affects mental wellbeing. To help people stick to their resolutions in a mentally healthy way, Oettingen developed the WOOP method, which stands for Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, and Plan. It combines hope with realism, and helps people work toward goals without feeling overwhelmed or self-critical.

The first step, Wish, encourages people to choose a meaningful and achievable resolution. Choosing a realistic wish reduces pressure and in turn, protects mental health. For example, focusing on 'improving emotional balance' is healthier than demanding perfection. The second step, Outcome, involves imagining the positive result of achieving the resolution. This step increases motivation and reminds people why the goal matters to their wellbeing. Thinking about emotional benefits strengthens commitment without creating unrealistic expectations. The third step, Obstacle, asks people to honestly identify what might stop them. Recognizing obstacles such as stress, procrastination, or low energy reduces self-blame. This step supports mental health by normalizing difficulties instead of labeling them as failure. The final step, Plan, involves creating a simple 'if-then' strategy to handle obstacles. For example, planning beforehand to take a short break if one feels overwhelmed increases emotional safety. Such plans improve self-control and confidence, while effectively reducing anxiety.

Research shows that people who use the WOOP method are more likely to stay committed to their goals. Unlike harsh or rigid resolutions, WOOP encourages self-compassion and flexibility. This new year, psychology reminds us that gentle, realistic change is better for mental health than pressure or perfection.

Adya M Sidharth
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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 1) _____ psychologists conduct research on the cognitive, emotional and social changes that occur across the lifespan.
- 2) _____ used introspection to try to identify the basic elements of psychological experience.
- 3) Free will is typically contrasted with _____.
- 4) _____ punishment weakens a response by removing or reducing something pleasant after the response.
- 5) _____ is the tendency to perform tasks more poorly when other people are present.
- 6) The idea that stress can sometimes have a positive effect is captured by Selye's concept of _____.
- 7) According to Freud, the _____ stage is when children experience sexual desire for the opposite-sex parent.
- 8) When above-average values for one variable tend to be associated with below-average values for the other variable, the two variables are _____.
- 9) _____ is a sleep disorder characterized by pauses in breathing that last at least ten seconds.
- 10) The term _____ is used to describe a vivid and emotional memory of an unusual event that people believe they remember very well.

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SCROLLING THROUGH AWARENESS, LIVING WITH STRESS: MENTAL HEALTH SESSION EXPLORES REEL VS REAL WELL-BEING

As part of the National Service Scheme (NSS) 10-day camp organized by the CUSAT NSS Unit, I had the opportunity to conduct a two-hour interactive mental health awareness session for engineering students. The session aimed to move beyond definitions and bring attention to the lived realities of mental health challenges faced by today's young adults.

The discussion focused on key concerns such as anxiety, depression, burnout, academic stress, and substance abuse. While these terms are widely known among students, the session revealed a significant gap between awareness and self-care practices. Many young adults recognize mental health issues but remain uncertain about how to manage emotional distress or seek timely support.

Through interactive dialogue and real-life scenarios, students openly shared experiences related to academic pressure, emotional exhaustion, and fear of failure. As a budding psychologist, it became evident that burnout and academic stress are no longer occasional concerns but persistent experiences for many engineering students navigating competitive academic environments.

An important observation during the session was the presence of unresolved emotional experiences rooted in childhood and adolescence. Although often overlooked, these unresolved issues continue to influence self-esteem, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships. In some cases, indicators of post-traumatic stress emerged during discussions, highlighting how past emotional or traumatic experiences can silently shape present behavior and mental well-being.

The session emphasized that mental health is not merely the absence of illness, but the ability to cope, adapt, and function effectively in daily life. Practical strategies for mental well-being were shared, focusing on simple yet effective lifestyle practices such as ensuring 6-8 hours of quality sleep, maintaining a balanced and nutritious diet, engaging in regular physical activity, and incorporating meditation or yoga into daily routines.

Students were also introduced to accessible psychological techniques to manage stress and anxiety. These included journaling as a means of emotional expression, box breathing techniques for immediate calming during anxious moments, and an introduction to Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation (JPMR) to reduce physical tension and promote relaxation.

The session reinforced the importance of early awareness, emotional processing, and professional support. Mental health care should not be viewed as a response to crisis alone, but as a continuous process of self-care and reflection. Programmes like this NSS initiative play a crucial role in creating safe spaces for dialogue and in encouraging young adults to prioritize their mental well-



As conversations around mental health continue to grow, it is essential to ensure that awareness is accompanied by action, support, and accessible coping tools. Empowering students with psychological knowledge and practical skills can significantly contribute to healthier, more resilient individuals and communities.

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I MSc Psychology

Audio Version for Quick Listening



RESEARCH WITHOUT
CHAOS



CONNECTION



INFLUENCE OF
SOCIAL MEDIA



THE WOOP
METHOD



MENTAL HEALTH
SESSION



MOVING FORWARD

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WE'RE ALL MOVING FORWARD, JUST NOT THE SAME WAY

We're all moving through time at the same pace. The same calendar, the same deadlines, the same passing years. But to be frank, none of us is really living the same life. If you decided to read beyond the first line, thank you. This might quietly remind you that you're not alone in how you feel.

Each of us is walking a path shaped by our own thoughts, opinions, choices, and quiet battles. Somewhere between lectures, assignments, and late nights, we realize that growing up isn't as colorful as it was once promised.

College is supposed to be exciting. It's meant to be the phase where everything starts making sense. Instead, for many of us, it slowly turns into a survival game. The excitement fades, routines take over, and days begin to feel like tasks that need to be completed rather than experiences to be lived.

There is a lot we carry, even when no one can see it.

Academics demand constant attention. Personal needs are pushed aside because there's always something more urgent to finish. Family expectations shape our decisions in ways we don't always talk about. Friendships bring comfort, but also comparison. And then there's love, which is confusing, intense, and deeply personal, quietly affecting everything else in our lives.

Trying to balance all of this isn't easy. Some days, everything feels overwhelming. Thoughts get clouded. Decisions feel heavier than they should. We begin questioning choices we once believed in. You can be doing everything right and still feel lost. And that's one of the hardest things to admit.

Slowly, college starts feeling less like a place of growth and more like a system to survive. Grades matter more than understanding. Results start defining self-worth. Watching others move ahead makes us wonder if we're falling behind. Without realizing it, we start measuring our journey using someone else's ruler.

Over time, this pressure changes the way we see ourselves. Doubt creeps in. We question our abilities and our future. Dreams that once excited us may start feeling unrealistic. That inner fire, the one that made us curious, passionate, and alive, begins to dim. We still attend classes, finish tasks, and say what's expected of us. But inside, it can feel like we're running on autopilot.

Functioning is not the same as living.

And many of us are just functioning.

But feeling this way doesn't mean we're weak. It means we're human. We're trying to be students, children, friends, partners, and individuals all at once. This phase of life is heavy, and it's okay to admit that. Struggling does not mean you're failing; it means you're growing.

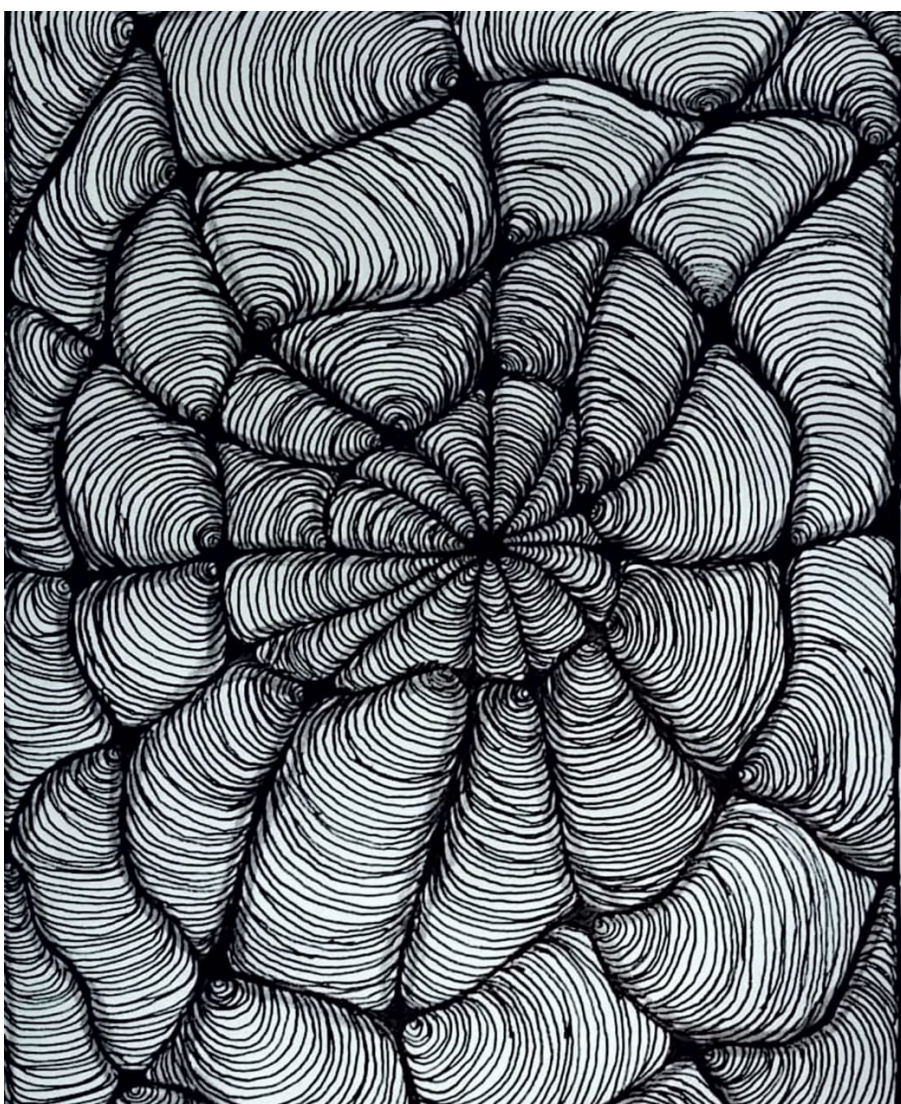
Maybe what we need isn't more pressure to perform, but more space to pause. Space to reflect. Space to remember why we started. Colleges can teach us how to succeed, but we must remind ourselves that our worth is not limited to marks or productivity. You're much more than that. I may not know you personally, but I'm sure you're trying your very best every single day. And if you're reading this right now, I want you to know that I'm proud of you. Keep going.

In the end, we may all move forward through time together, but no two paths are the same. Some days will feel heavier than others. Some moments will test us more than we expected. But as long as we hold on to our sense of self and protect that spark within us, we are not just surviving.

We are learning, becoming, and slowly finding our way.

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BENDING REALITY



Liya PJ
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Answers to Test your Knowledge

1. Developmental
2. Structuralism
3. Determinism
4. Negative
5. Social inhibition
6. Eustress
7. Phallic
8. Negatively correlated
9. Sleep apnea
10. Flash-bulb memory