

# *Mental Health Perspectives in Hyderabad*

*(a synthesized Perspective Report)*

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<https://sketchboard.me/Xz2Ye6Vjtcox>

## Summaries

### *Shireen Kaul's Perspective*

*The intent behind this report was to give individuals an opportunity to share their perspectives on themselves, their start-ups, and mental health. The questions that were asked in these mini sessions were to discover what drives people on a day-to-day basis, hear the challenges they face on an individual level as well as start-up basis, and gather their thoughts on mental health awareness in India. These sessions allowed people to freely express themselves, without any judgement. Lastly, the purpose of these conversations were to normalize and raise awareness about topics such as mental health/illness.*

*Each individual was approached and given a brief summary on the type of questions that would be asked. Each individual willingly accepted to have these conversations, and were given the option to pass on questions that they were not comfortable answering. The answers gave a glimpse on how the level of awareness of mental health can have an effect on individuals stability and their productivity.*

*India has a serious lack of mental health resources and awareness programs. For over one billion people, there are only 4,000 registered psychologists. On top of that, they do not have adequate training nor resources to deal with patients. There are also very few psychiatrists who have proper training to deal with more severe cases. Mental illness is a topic of taboo, and very stigmatized within Indian culture. There is still a lot of shame and hesitation when it comes to talking about mental health in general, and it is not a priority of the average Indian. In my opinion, tackling the foundational issues, such as lack of awareness of mental struggles, and lack of resources, are major factors that need to be addressed. Without this, I do not see any significant progress being made in the mental health field.*

*Each report will be presented either as public or anonymous, and by an individual basis. Most of the questions remained consistently the same for each session, but there will be some variance. Additionally, all responses are in first person perspective from those answering the questions. The answers noted from the individuals are not 100% word-for-word, but are still accurate representations.*

### *Ranjeeth Thunga's Perspective*

**MISSION:** *The mission of this Mental Health Report is to present a basic synthesis of the perspectives of several different individuals within Hyderabad to gain clarity on personal and mental-health challenges that we collectively experience and can address.*

**THE PEOPLE:** *The report includes startups and staff at T-Hub, students within IIIT, and lower-income citizens in Hyderabad. This isn't meant to be a comprehensive survey of the state of mental health within the city, but rather a sampling and test-case for further exploration..*

**VALUE:** *Though there is value simply from a general data collection and insight gaining, this work I feel is more than that. It is partially research, but also providing an instant benefit to those we are talking with.. The benefit to those we spoke with are is that we are providing them an opportunity to express and share their inner experiences with someone who is interested in learning about them and their value on a*

*deeper level. This can be a relief and clarification for them. It also is worth saying that this work serves to broaden our own perspective and helps us gain experience in how to connect with different people for future analysis.*

***SUMMARY of FINDINGS:*** *Even though these were very short conversations, the people almost unanimously told us they valued the dialog, expressing happiness that another person cares about their life experiences as well as feeling a bit of relief from offloading what they might have been carrying on their shoulders.*

***RESOURCES:*** *In terms of resources to turn to, people leverage a strong connection to certain friends, family, and spiritual practices, as well as spending time working through challenges on their own. While responses varied much, and different personal and interpersonal coping styles exist, many expressed standard mental health treatment options as not viable or relevant for them for common life challenges.*

*In addition, many shared there is a lack of professional venues or even viable alternatives. Seeking a professional counsellor or therapist is considered appropriate for extreme cases only.*

***WHAT I PERSONALLY LEARNED:*** *I feel the experience broadened my experience of perspectives of people in India as it relates to personal challenges people are going through in their life. It helped me get a glimpse into the depth of the inner worlds of the people around and get more in touch with the lack of apparent options in front of them. This will inform further projects we work on.*

***NEXT STEPS:*** *The next phase of this work would be an even broader and more systematic perspective analysis of key populations in the city and/or country. This could be a direct follow-up addressing mental-health challenges or an indirect follow-up representing different facets of one's perspectives.*

*From a mental health angle, in future work, we could have an eye for providing follow-up resources. From a more general angle, we could ensure that the full value and perspective of various populations come to the surface, with the data stored in a central perspective database. This database can be accessed and used by anyone to glean a variety of insights on human perspectives. This would greatly benefit from key sponsors or partners keen on conducting this type of research in the future.*

## ***References***

***For references about Mental Health Awareness in India, check out these links:***

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/health-fitness/health-news/Are-mental-health-facilities-in-India-ad-equate/articleshow/40190993.cms>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2015/10/10/depression-stats\\_n\\_8267510.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2015/10/10/depression-stats_n_8267510.html)

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/in-mental-health-india-has-a-serious-problem-on-its-hands/article6427488.ece>

## Reports

### T-Hub Startups

*Anonymous [July 12th, 2016], Male, Entrepreneur*

1. ***What inspires/drives you?*** The inequality present in the world, especially in India, is a motivation to change the broken system [i.e: backdoors, dishonesty (school)]
2. ***Why did you start your startup?*** I got into the specific field of --- because I enjoy traveling. I was in the US, and traveling in the US helped me discover my love for traveling and my idea got validated there. But I wanted to pin point the idea in India.
3. ***What are your short term and long term goals?*** There's this idea of working as hard as you can till 40 years old, make money, and then travel. Now though, I'm neck deep in a start up and establishing a company in India, and my focus is more on corporate than academic.
4. ***Perceptions of mental health?*** The irony is that I haven't had anyone close to me in my friends or family circle, that have dealt with any mental health struggle. So I haven't come across the topic a lot.
5. ***Why is there is a lack of mental health discussion in India?*** I think part of it has to do with awareness. Most things people think about are inherent, and mental health discussions are not one of those topics. People accept their problems and deal with it at home. Also developing countries don't give mental health awareness any importance and they don't have any policies set in place to show that it's the priority.
6. ***Do you ever discuss mental health with family and friends?*** No, I don't particularly talk about it with them.
7. ***What are some stigmas associated with mental illness?*** Nothing comes to mind.
8. ***How do you deal with being unmotivated/sad/down?*** I love to sleep, and time permitting I'll watch movies or TV series. I also used to run and play sports a lot.
9. ***How do you think mental health awareness will change in India/do you think it will?*** Urban India probably makes up less than <20% of the population and of that 20%, maybe 5% are concerned with mental health awareness. I don't know if it'll happen, maybe in 20-40 years.

*Observations [Shireen]: This individual seemed a little nervous to answer questions about mental health. I gave people a general guideline of questions that I would be asking them, so when I mentioned mental health, I definitely noticed a slight discomfort with it. After the session, the individual asked me if the answers they gave meant that they "were stable and OK in the head," which to me indicates that their understanding of mental health is a little limited. I made sure to clarify afterwards that I'm in no way qualified to analyze his mental state, but rather I was trying to understand their perceptions on a few topics.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: (from reading report) For me, the perception that one has a broad outlook on many areas of life but might not have cultivated on outlook on mental health. It's a reminder that mental health*

*doesn't even have to exist as a concept in people's minds for them to carry on with their lives in a meaningful way..*

*V[July 14th, 2016], Male, PR Manager*

1. ***Why did you start working for your startup?*** I work as a public relations manager for a startup, but I have a background in technology. We try to break the barrier between doctors and patients
2. ***What inspires and drives you?*** Nothing specific drives me. After coming to this job and getting paid to work, I realized that I'm being trusted to do my job and have been given independence. Because of this, I dedicate my time to work for them.
3. ***What are your short term goals and long term goals?*** I don't have any particular short term goals, but for long term goals, I want to better society and make an impact somehow. Whether that be starting with 10-15 individuals in each city of India, and spread it around.
4. ***What are your perceptions on mental health and mental illness?*** Every individual has their own struggles - mental physical, etc. I believe that even my friends don't know anything about me in reality. Maybe only one of my friends knows everything about me.
5. ***Why do you think there is a lack of mental health discussion in India?*** No one is using the existing facilities in India properly. People should change these facilities and make them better. Indians have adopted Western cultures only half way. We're lost between Indian and Western culture, and there is no clarity. People are too focused on themselves to care about anything else.
6. ***Why don't people talk to each other about mental health with each other?*** I don't see the need necessarily because everyone should have the same amount of levels of each emotion. If I tell you a joke once, you'll laugh. But if I keep repeating the joke then you won't laugh again. Why waste time spent on being sad or angry over and over again when you can move on? The past is the past, and should be left behind.
7. ***What do you do when you're feeling down?*** I completely lost everything 8 months ago but I told myself I have to fight against failure. For 3 months I didn't do anything at all; my father had passed away and I had to stay strong for the rest of the family. If my father's soul is at peace, why should I waste time thinking about the same situation. If I cry, my father won't come back; everyone dies eventually so I'll meet him in heaven. I had to leave my past because it's up to me to be in the present.
8. ***Would a counselor be of use at T-Hub?*** I think instead more well rounded mentors would be useful. A counselor might not be an appropriate resource, because they won't be able to help out start ups with their actual content.
9. ***Are you open to signing up for a session with Perspective Mapper?*** Right now I don't have time but the actual concept is interesting to me.

*Observations [Shireen]: Overall, V was really willing to share his perspectives about the questions I asked. He had a lot to say about each topic*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: (Reading the responses) For me, reading these responses gives me a whole new light into this person. It's a reminder the depth of a person's backdrop and vision might not come to the surface due to some other behavior/distraction. In this case, some of the behaviors I observed gave little indication what he is experiencing under the surface. There is a definite need for us to be careful in ensuring we are always making room for a broader perspective of each other.*

**S [July 15th, 2016], Male, Entrepreneur**

1. ***What inspires/drives you?*** Finding meaning in everything. I see things as they are, and it doesn't have to always be positive
2. ***Why did you start your startup?*** Previously, I was a cofounder of a cancer genomics company and my partner convinced me to start it since I have a lot of knowledge about the topic.
3. ***What are your short-term goals and long-term goals?*** My short term goal is to launch the product that I built with my startup. My long-term goal is take genomics to child hospitals specifically.
4. ***What are your perceptions on mental health and mental illnesses?*** I think that people who have some sort of mental illness, they don't even understand themselves what they are going through. It seems to be a very unexplored area. I have read a lot of Andrew Solomon's work, and he is amazing.
5. ***Why is there a lack of mental health discussion in India?*** Indian self-esteem is lower and this can be attributed to colonialism. Colonialism is the culprit and destroyed Indian culture and identity. Self-esteem directs our behavior and Indians are constantly comparing themselves to other people whether it be disorders, skin color, caste, religion, etc. Discrimination is basic human nature; so we will discriminate each other. The criteria of discrimination is culture oriented.
6. ***Do you talk about mental health with your friends and family?*** My family doesn't necessarily have the level of education to talk about or understand mental health in general. Some of my friends talk about disorders and all, but others think that disorders are just people being delusional.
7. ***What do you do when you're feeling down/sad/unmotivated?*** I smoke, like drinking tea, or will take a walk.
8. ***Do you think getting a counselor at T-Hub will be beneficial?*** No. At least not in this current scenario, because T-Hub is a professional environment and should stay professional. People don't want to bring their personal issues into a professional situation.

*Observations [Shireen]: I had had conversations with S about some topics we touched on during the conversation a couple of times before. He also was really willing to share about his thoughts and actually has done his own research on mental health and mental illnesses so his knowledge was a little more extensive than some other individuals. It seemed that for him it was just a normal, everyday conversation and did not seem phased by any questions.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: S has developed a deep inquiry and sophistication in his framework for the mind, reality, and his experiences. He has a sharp rational/material perspective of reality and though he has gone through a more spiritual/metaphysical phase, he no longer sees the world in such a way. That said, at the same time, he connects to the heart through a very different modality which includes -- lest I inadvertently pigeonhole his personality. He embraces and cultivates what I feel is a very powerful, unique perception of the world. In my interactions, it is a challenge to ensure that I am not stepping on his perspective while still sharing my own experiences. I feel he has learned to give full value to his own perspective through the dialog that I've had with him.*

**R [July 21st, 2016]. Male, Entrepreneur**

1. **What inspires you on a day to day basis?** God damn. Mostly it's wanting to do something interesting, and learning something new on day to day basis. And out of boredom.
2. **What are your short-term goals and long-term goals?** My short-term goal is to start making money again. My long-term goal is to be productive in general.
3. **Perceptions of mental health and illness?** We all have to deal with some sort of issue and another. It's way more prevalent than people think it is. Especially depression. At a societal level, humans right now aren't forced to focus on individual mental health. People do yoga and exercise, but there is a lack of doing something for the mind.
4. **Why do people in India not talk about their mental health?** It's very hard. It's a slow process. It's a problem of awareness and problem of lack of resources. On a personal level, there is a lack of time to look into our mental health. You can't spend one hour every day meditating- at least that's what people think.
5. **What needs to change to increase awareness?** It's not about providing mental health facilities. It's about changing the mindset. The problem is much deeper, and how will people understand things they don't know about?
6. **What do you if you're feeling sad or unmotivated?** Since the last year I've started meditating and it's pretty effective if you practice on it. It's very hard to do it everyday. If I do it everyday anyway, whenever I'm feeling blue or sad, I'll still feel it, but not as much. It's a perspective issue. It gives you a perspective that you don't usually have, but it's too late. But if you meditate everyday you have that constant perspective. Meditation is truly a powerful tool. Mindfulness meditation is really a powerful voice, albeit it's hard to do. It's hard for people to follow. Again people don't know what they don't know. It's just sitting down, and looking at your breathing. But how do you manage to get something out of it? I don't really know, but it works.
7. **Would getting a counselor at T-Hub be useful?** Of course people would use it. I would. Some people have weird stories of experiences with psychologists and psychiatrists. I think it might be a quality issue. But a room where people can meditate would be really useful. It could be 24 hours and some instruction video could be playing in the background. I think that would be nice.

*Observations [Shireen]: R was really open to having a conversation from the beginning. The first few questions sort of stumped him, but the later questions he had a lot to share. I think he has a really mature*



*understanding of how people perceive mental health in India, and seems to have given it some thought beforehand.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: (based on reading report) It is cool to hear the championing of meditation as a practice that can cultivate mental health, and a lens for understanding the shortfalls in society addressing the health of the mind. This triggered in me a different take on mental health -- kinda like exercise for the mind.*

**S [July 7th, 2016], Female, Entrepreneur**

1. ***What inspires/drives you? Why did you start your startup?*** Women Empowerment is what inspires me. I want to empower women and help them become financially independent. I want women to be able to have respectable part-time jobs, especially after they have kids.
2. ***What is something you wish someone told you before launching/beginning a startup?*** Nothing. So far everything has been going well.
3. ***How do you destress?*** Currently my whole life revolves around my startup so they both are tied in together. When I have time I'll watch movies or go on vacation.
4. ***What do you wish you had more time/energy/money for?*** I wish I had more time in general.
5. ***How do you work under pressure?*** I work well under pressure and I'm very good at time management and like to get things done in a timely fashion.
6. ***What are your short-term goals and long-term goals?*** I don't really have any short term goals. My long-term goal is to create a startup that has credibility and has a name for itself. I want to make an impact on a large scale; small impact won't work for me. I want to establish the startup in India and spread it globally.
7. ***What are your perceptions on mental health?/Why is there a lack of mental health discussion within India?*** Mental illness is divided. You have things like schizophrenia where they have maybe two adequate facilities like in Bangalore [NIMAMS] I actually looked up some stuff beforehand because I was curious. People are not open and don't want to discuss these issues openly. Joint families help camouflage these problems that people might have. There is also nothing called therapy here; only psychiatry. A major chunk of the population doesn't have the awareness and are scared to talk about such things. I don't think there will be progression with mental health ever in the near future in India. Also family helps with the continuation of this whole "get over it" mentality.
8. ***What are your thoughts on gender equality in India?*** If the woman is happy then the family is happy. Therefore society will be better off and happier. In the middle class, women don't think they are capable of having their own businesses or even starting one. They aren't encouraged to be financially independent. Regarding the higher class, a lot of women will go to school abroad, come back to India, and then start their own business. Majority of my business experiences have been good so far, but I've had to struggle a lot initially. I once read a story about a lady who was proposing her business plan in front of some investors, and her idea was rejected because she happened to be pregnant at that time. Balancing a family and a job as a woman is extremely hard, and it sucks because there aren't resources for women to find adequate jobs or non blue-collar jobs. Family plays a huge role on how children's mentalities are developed.

*Observations [Shireen]: S was really enthusiastic about our discussion. She actually ended up googling some topics that I mentioned to her on her own, so she could have a better understanding about them. She's truly passionate about women empowerment and has a deep understanding on the value of women in society. She brought up really interesting points about how the family has a huge influence on the progression of mental health.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: Having spent time in America, S seems to have a broad outlook on mental-health and society. It was intriguing to hear the challenges and limitations from the lens of facing and dealing with the walls first-hand that she feels through the people she works with. The final factor that determines where a woman can seek help from is in the potential they themselves can actually recognize -- and the limitations they perceive are as far as they can explore.*

**SP [July 18th, 2016], Male, Entrepreneur**

1. ***What inspires you/drives you?*** I'm not really inspired by anything or anyone. I've seen too many ups and downs in my life in a short amount of time, which all of a sudden changed my thought process. Once event in someone's life or one phase, will define you as a person. I don't know if that should be called destiny or something else. For me my life changing moment happened when I was 26, but I believe it can happen to anyone at anytime.
2. ***What are your short-term goals and long-term goals?*** Personally, I don't really have any goals nor am I trying to set that up. Long-term wise, I want to help kids that are < 10 years old without parents. I think that kids of this age can be molded, and their minds can be trained for more successful thought. I want to help kids with shelter, education, and have a healthy life. My sister and I had extremely similar backgrounds, but she is making a lot of money right now. She might've had more focused thoughts, and I was a little more scrambled with mine.
3. ***Perceptions on mental health and mental awareness in general?*** Difficult question to answer. It's an important topic to discuss, but I don't have emotions.
4. ***Do you talk about mental health with your friends and family?*** I don't talk about it with others because I know how to control my emotions. I believe that I can handle situations on my own and I'm at the point in my life where I can deal with my emotions on my own. If I feel that I can't do that, I will reach out to other people.
5. ***Why do people in India not talk about mental health?*** Life is fast paced and people are least bothered about these subjects; it's a taboo/Stigma. Most Indians are not aware and matured enough about this subject. Indians have more bigger and important problems than these which are more relevant and important from them.
6. ***What do you do if you're feeling sad or down?*** I have a couple of videos and movies that I like to watch if I'm not feeling myself. My mind doesn't stick to an emotion for a long length of time.
7. ***Do you think getting a counselor at T-Hub will be beneficial?*** I don't think there is anything wrong from learning from other people. But it's a tricky situation because it depends from person to person. Most people will not be willing to share their emotions with a stranger, so in that sense it would never work. It might work if you establish some sort of connection with people first.

8. **Have you had a session with Perspective Mapper? Why or why not?** I haven't had a session with Ranjeeth yet, because I'm still trying to understand PM as a whole. As of right now, I don't see the tangible point of having a conversation with a Perspective Analyst because there are no next steps. What do you do with a report and a map? What is being fixed?

*Observations [Shireen]: SP actually had his own set of questions about the work I was doing so he had a natural curiosity on the questions I was going to ask him. His perceptions on mental health are very personally based, in the sense that he feels he does not need any assistance when it comes to controlling his emotions. I think he has a really genuine interest in expanding his knowledge about the topics we touched on in our conversation*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: SP has a very deep questioning and analytical mind that, however, in his words, isn't directly tied to his emotions. So it is coming from a place that might be detached from his humanity. Very inquisitive and genuine nature to understand.*

## T-Hub Facilities

### A [July 26th, 2016], Female \*Telugu translator used

1. **What is your job?** Cashier; Service business
2. **What are your life goals?** I want to help my Mom and Dad in everything.
3. **What motivates you?** In India, you need to have have a boy to get the family going, but in my family the older siblings are all girls. I don't want my parents to feel that there is an absence of older boys in the family. There are 4 of us sisters, and 2 very young brothers.
4. **What do you do when you're feeling sad?** I try to forget it and I don't share it with anyone. I cry by myself, but if I keep crying then I won't move forward. That's how life is.
5. **Have you ever been exposed to discussions about mental health and illness?** Nobody has discussed this topic with me but it has randomly come up in conversation with friends since they've had to deal with such problems in their families.

*Observations [Shireen]: Initially, A was quite reluctant to answer any questions that we had for her. Her answers were pretty short, but I feel towards the end of the conversation she was a little more comfortable.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: She was a bit shy to talk at first but quickly felt comfortable even though a few of us were around. I observed within myself a connection to shared humanity when she talked about crying and the inability to talk through stuff with others. I felt the great challenges that another is going through beneath the surface.*

### R [July 26th, 2016], Female \*Telugu translator used

1. **What is your job?** I work in the service business
2. **What are your life goals?** Currently I'm struggling a lot and I want to better my life. I want to settle down and earn money.
3. **What motivates you?** If I come to work, I get paid. Work will give me money in my hands.
4. **What do you do when you're feeling sad?** I'll cry for half an hour.
5. **Have you ever been exposed to discussions about mental health and illness?** I'll talk to Anuradha about any problems that I have. I don't share my problems with family members because when I feel sad and tell my mom, then my mom will feel even more sad. For this reason, I don't tell my mom.

*Observations [Shireen]: R was really hesitant to have a conversation with us. I feel like she was worried that we were asking her questions regarding her job, so she did not want to answer them. You could see by her body language that she was uncomfortable in the beginning, but I think she also relaxed a little towards the end.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: I felt R was hesitant at first but did want to answer the questions. There's a lot behind her eyes. As I've known her for the last few months, I personally felt a certain trust was already established. I felt a deep sincerity in her words and sensed her appreciation of the dialog.*

**Ch [July 26th, 2016], Male \*Telugu translator used**

1. ***What is your job?*** I am a security supervisor.
2. ***What are your life goals?*** My life goals are to settle down very well, and the simple goal of a 9-6 job. I don't have big dreams.
3. ***What motivates you?*** Self-perseverance.
4. ***What do you do when you're sad?*** I try to solve the problem; every problem has a solution. You have to think differently, analyze the problem and then you'll get the solution.
5. ***Have you ever been exposed to discussions about mental health and illness?*** No. None of my friends or family have any mental issues.

*Observations [Shireen]: Ch wanted the conversation to be over as quickly as possible. His answers were really rushed and very succinct. He didn't really expand on his answers either when asked to. He I think wanted to get back to his desk for his job.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: I think the urgency to get back to his job was a distraction. I sensed if we caught him in a different time, he would share a bit more.*

**P R [July 26th, 2016], Male \*Telugu translator used**

1. ***What is your job?*** Housekeeping supervisor
2. ***What are your life goals?*** I haven't really set any goals, but I've had many ideas. I like to take things one step at a time to achieve whatever goal. I want to be the best in every field that I work in. Before this, I worked in HR and was the best and now I work in facilities and want to be the best.
3. ***What motivates you?*** Ants. Ants carry more than a hundred times their weight. Even if they are under pressure they never back down. If you put something in an ants way, it will just find a way to move around it.
4. ***What do you do when you're sad?*** I single down a place and sit there. I think about the problem for five to six hours and then I'll go to sleep. By the morning the problem will be gone.
5. ***Have you ever been exposed to discussions about mental health and illness?*** I myself haven't gone to counseling. When I was in the healthcare business, many people had discussions with me about their problems, and I would give them advice but never forced it on anyone. One time my friend and his wife were having a misunderstanding and were yelling at each other. I told my friend to keep quiet when she is yelling, so the situation won't become worse. People eventually calm down. Once they let everything out, you can talk about it properly. Yelling at each other only makes it worse.

*Observations [Shireen]: PR was pretty willing to answer the questions we had for him. He had some exposure to the topics we touched on during the conversation, and shared a really wonderful analogy with us.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: PR seems to have a natural proclivity towards self-reflection and personal empowerment. He seems to have taken a very conscious approach towards dealing with personal and interpersonal challenges.*

**L [July 26th, 2016], Female \*Telugu translator used**

1. ***What is your job?*** I work in housekeeping.
2. ***What are your life goals?*** I don't have any goals for myself. I have 2 kids and want them to study well and achieve something.
3. ***What motivates you?*** Even if I'm not feeling well I'll go to work because I'm worried that I'll get in trouble. Or I might lose my job and without job I'll have no money. Since I didn't study, I have to work much harder and then I have to go home, cook, eat, sleep, and then come back to work next morning. A lot of time I wonder if my life has any meaning more than this. I don't want my kids to make the same mistakes I did.
4. ***What do you do when you're feeling sad?*** When I'm sad, I think that this is my life and how it's supposed to be.
5. ***Have you ever been exposed to discussions about mental health and illness?*** Nobody has discussed this topic with me. I don't like to share my problems with other people. I'm raising two kids on my own and try to make ends meet even though I don't have the proper resources. When I share my problems, everyone makes it seem that they are worse off than her.
6. ***How did you feel being asked these questions and answering them?*** I'm wondering why you're writing my responses down. I felt good answering the questions and I'm happy to share.

*Observations [Shireen]: L was really sweet about answering our questions. I think she was curious about the point of the conversation was, but she was happy to share with us her thoughts.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: Sincerity came through very strongly and indication that people all around us are going through challenging inner experiences we might not simply give any weight or consideration to.*

*Hyderabad Citizens*

*A [August 8th, 2016], Male \*Telugu translator used*

1. ***What is your job?*** I used to work for the past twelve years as a watchmen but now I'm a driver.
2. ***Give us some background on your life:*** I come from Parigi, which is near Hyderabad. I had a love marriage with my childhood friend and I have 3 kids; 2 boys and 1 girl. I grew up with 3 brothers and 3 sisters and my father died at an early age. Before I was a watchmen I used to be a laborer with Ramchandra. I've only studied up till 7th standard.
3. ***What are your objectives in life?*** I just bought a motorcycle 2 months ago, and now I want to buy a car and have a taxi service. I want to get into the vehicle business, and make some money so I can educate my kids. I wasn't very educated so I want my kids to be. Most of society depends on their parents, and my dad passed away when I was young so I want to be there for my kids. When my dad died, I went out and did small jobs to help myself and then I learned how to drive. I want to make sure that I can support my family. 20 years ago the political system wasn't supportive for the poor. Now that is changing slowly and I want to take advantage of the support that they are providing, except sometimes the middle man comes in between.
4. ***Have you ever been exposed to talking about mental health?*** When I get stressed, it's really difficult to talk to others so me and Ramchandra talk between ourselves. People don't really lend their shoulders to listen so we have to confide in each other. Nobody cares if we live or die, so we have to learn how to support each other.
5. ***How did you feel answering these questions?*** I feel happy when someone asks me questions about myself. I was happy to share my answers with you all.

*Observations [Shireen]: A seemed genuinely happy to share his answers with us. He had a lot to say for each question we asked him and was extremely warm.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: I felt A was genuinely intrigued and happy to play a role in our research. I felt a strong maturity in his approach and a willingness to help and communicate his experiences.*

*R [August 8th, 2016], Male \*Telugu translator used*

1. ***What is your job?*** I used to work in the labor field as well as a watchmen. I started working as a coconut vendor just a couple of months ago. I learned how to sell coconuts from another coconut vendor who taught me everything. Anyone who works for daily waged is slightly ostracized from society.
2. ***Do you have any kids?*** I have a boy and girl. I'm making my son study in a better, private school to give him a higher position in society. My girl is also studying. Also, I wish my mother lived with me but she doesn't want to leave her hometown.

3. ***What are your life goals and inspirations?*** I used to work as a common laborer to take care of cattle. Now, I want to provide more for my kids. I used to earn 6,000 rupees as a watchmen and then I used to be a bricklayer. Society makes laborers feel inferior. I made my daughter get married at 18 because I wanted her to have a better life. I want to see my son get a good job position. My overall objective is to take care of my wife and kids. Pushing my son to get a better job for a better life and God are the most important to me.
4. ***How do you deal with challenges?*** I have no other choice but to talk to myself and get through challenges. I've had trouble with the police sometimes because of my coconut stand. You have to create trust between you and your coworkers because they will support you in the end. You only have one chance to create that trust between them otherwise word travels and no one will support you.

*Observations [Shireen]: R was a little more reserved than his friend A when it came to answering questions. He needed a little more encouragement and prodding to expand on his initial answers.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: R triggered in me the sense of struggle that he is going through is not just him but countless others in a position of finding a way to make it all work and make life work for their families. That's what occupies the minds of many people.*

**Ra (wife), Husband, Na (daughter), Fa (son) [August 8th, 2016], \*Hindi and Telugu**

1. ***What is your job?*** *Husband:* I used to be a watchman, but now me and my wife sell chai. I also sometimes will clean dishes for 2-4 hours to make extra money. Whatever job I come across I will do.
2. ***How many kids do you have?*** We have six kids. The youngest is 8 and the oldest is 20. None of them go to school anymore because they stopped going to school. The traffic became too much and it became too difficult. The two youngest kids stay in a hostel in a Madrasa in Nander. *Naziya and Faiyaz:* Parents are supposed to push their kids to go to school, but our parents stopped doing that.
3. ***Do you have any family nearby?*** *Rajiya:* Both of my parents have died, but my husband's mother is still nearby.
4. ***How do you face challenges in your life?*** We've both seen enough life now we have kids. We need to make money to raise our kids. There are eight people in the house and our rent is 7,000 rupees a month. We have no outside support. I eldest daughter got married and has a 4 month old baby, so that is a relief. We have to support each other and we enjoy what we're doing. We want to make sure that our daughter who just turned 18 gets married too.
5. ***Do you have any people to support you through your challenges?*** We don't really have anyone else to talk to that will provide us any support or relief. No one from either of our families will support us so we have to support ourselves and each other.
6. ***How do you use faith as a way to get through challenges?*** *Husband:* We have a masjid close by. The kids are the one's who need to take care of things now; it's not up to us parents anymore. My faith is working and raising a family. Our little boy is the one who goes for namaz five times a day because he's used to it from school.



7. **How did you feel about having this conversation?** No one really asks us questions of this nature. We don't really have anything ahead of us to look forward to, but I don't mind talking about my life and sharing.

*Shireen [Observations]: I really enjoyed speaking to all of the family members that were there at the chai stand. It was nice to hear multiple perspectives in one conversation, especially since the kids had their own input as well. It felt really good to hear that the couple appreciated the conversation we had with them, and you could tell from their body language that they were very happy.*

*Ranjeeth [Observations]: I valued the closeness that Gowtham and Shireen established with the family by the end of the conversation. The humanity was naturally bridged and it made me happy that it doesn't take much to touch someone's heart. The family members each had their own perspective and it is it's own dialog to have a conversation with a group of people rather than a single one, especially when they each share a different take on their priorities.*

**KK August 8th, 2016], \*Telugu translator used**

1. **What is your job?** I own a restaurant with my younger brother. I lost my parents 8 years ago. I used to live in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh. I got my degree and started pursuing my Masters but discontinued. I came to Hyderabad 15 years ago to work with my elder brother, but we had a huge conflict. I then began working with my younger brother, and now we know our work so well that we aren't dependant on others.
2. **How do you deal with life challenges?** 3 months ago I lost almost a lakh. I had to talk to myself and tell myself to compensate in the next few months for the lost we experienced and have to get by. I had the support of my younger brother and I listen to his advice when he gives it so it has created a trust between the two of us rather than competition. I prevent the problem rather than getting into it. I'll ask for advice beforehand so I avoid getting into the problem.
3. **What motivates you?** We used to have 2 restaurants earlier but then the chef left. We then decided to learn how to cook everything and we sold any goods that we had like jewelry and all. We had to get back on our feet and it's taken 5 years to get to the point we are at now. Right now I'm only focusing on what I have right now.
4. **What are your life goals?** People are forcing me to get married but I don't really feel ready for that. I'm still depressed from the loss of my parents.
5. **Where did you find support after the death of your parents?** I was unable to give back to my parents for all the hard times they went through to support their kids. That hurts me still. I want to advice people in society to be better. I have a childhood friend Surender Reddy who has supported me.
6. **How is faith a part of your life?** I go to church and temple. For me it's the same category. We're all common people. I've also religiously being going to the gym for the past 10 years for 2 hours in the morning; it activates my mind.
7. **How do you feel answering these questions?** I feel good that someone is asking about my life. My idea of sharing is making sure that I don't charge older people for food because they don't have the capabilities to work and make money.

*Observations [Shireen]: I think KK was a little bit distracted during the conversation because we were interrupting him at his workplace. He still shared a good amount of thoughts and responses with us, but we had to ask him to expand on his answers a little bit as well.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: KK was a bit busy with his work but still seemed happy, like the others, to have a conversation that explored and traced where he was coming from. He seems to have a naturally broad perspective when it comes to religion and a unique life story and dynamics, compelling him to look at others, especially elderly, in a particular light.*

**Migrant workers [August 8th, 2016], \*Telugu and Hindi**

- 1. *What is your job?*** We are construction workers from Bihar.
- 2. *How do you see your life?*** No one has asked us this question before. We eat, work, and are at peace. We were required to leave our home and come here to make a living.
- 3. *Why did you come to Hyderabad?*** In Bihar there is less work and not enough money given. Here the wages are better. Everyone living here has pretty much traveled and come together. We only stay around 3-6 months and then leave. Around 1200 laborers live on 3-4 acres of land in different locations.

*Observations [Shireen]: I would say we met with the most opposition and hesitation in the conversation with the migrant workers. None of the workers we spoke to really elaborated on any of the questions we asked them. Two of the guys that were there, the landlord and contractor, didn't want anyone else to answer the questions. I think to get proper responses from the workers, you'll have to use a middleman to make them feel more comfortable and less suspicious.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: I felt there was a subtle and deep interest that the people we were speaking with wanted to share their experiences. Ultimately however the distrust took control of their decision-making and they told us they couldn't answer questions. This made sense for me in that the questions could either be bringing up stuff they want to keep under-the-surface or the fear that the answers could be used against them. Without that much context in their minds, I could imagine this could be reasons for their resistance.*

*IIIT*

**Sh. [August 10th, 2016], IIIT Student**

1. ***What inspires and motivates you?*** Social issues inspire me. Anyone who tries to help others on any scale, and not just limited to people, it can be animals even, inspire me. That helping attitude and doing something for others and not themselves is inspiring.
2. ***What are your life goals or your life purpose?*** Again, I'm motivated by social problems. With the Nepal earthquake people didn't know where to go during the disaster. This influenced me to get my PhD in this type of field and working with evacuation routes. My long-term goal is to have a peaceful life and have the right amount of money; not too little and not too much. I also want to find a way to automate the process of making money and work on prevention methods for natural disasters.
3. ***What are your perceptions on mental health?*** The family is very important. It's a unit. If there is a strong family and value system, there will be a good support system and something to fall back on. This will help improve mental health. People think too much about one certain scenario which causes distress. People need to think with their 6 thinking hats and evaluate other people's perspective.
4. ***Do you think India has enough resources within the mental health field?*** I think India has sufficient resources. Family is the first resource, and I don't think awareness is less because we don't require resources as much. In corporations, there are definitely resources. They have workshops and counselors. IIIT has a part time counselor also.
5. ***How does faith play into your life?*** I believe in the supreme soul. I think the younger generation needs more convincing than previous generations did.
6. ***How did you feel answering these questions?*** It was fine. I think maybe to break the ice you can offer coffee or tea.

*Observations [Shireen]: S spoke a lot and had a lot to say about the questions we asked. Some of her responses were quite different than the previous responses that I heard, so that was interesting to hear.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: S liked to share a lot of her perspective. She took a different take on mental health resources in that her perspective was that there were sufficient resources in India -- they simply just might not be in the form that we expect them to be in. There was some challenge in the nature of the communications not being on-target -- this is a symptom of us still learning to plan out a more systematic approach to dialog.*

**H & T [August 10th, 2016], Talent Sprint**

1. ***What motivates you?*** *Both:* Basic survival.
2. ***Who inspires you?*** *T:* My uncle inspires me. He motivates and encourages me in all aspects. *H:* My dad inspires me. If he wants to do something, he will do it. I try to be like this. He helps direct me. After 10th standard, he helped me choose the right path that suits me. I try to be like this.

3. **How do you deal with stress?** *T:* Listen to music and resting. *H:* Listening to music, resting, and looking at nature.
4. **Who do you talk to when you're stressed?** *T:* Family; parents and siblings. *H:* I speak with my brother depending on the situation.
5. **What are your thoughts on mental health and illness?** We don't know about resources available in this case.
6. **Why don't people ask for professional help regarding mental health?** People go by a negative path. Professional help isn't the first thought.
7. **How does faith play into your life?** *T:* I don't believe in God. *H:* I believe in Sai Baba. Praying helps me. At a point in my life, I was really sick and in the hospital for a month. I thought I wouldn't do well in school but somehow everything worked out. I don't know how it worked, but it did.
8. **How did you feel about answering these questions?** It was good and we felt some relief and were able to share our views.

*Observations [Shireen]: I think language become a bit of an obstacle in this conversation. The responses were a little short but they still expressed a sort of relief from answering them.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: These two young women seemed very shy at first, but over time warmed up a bit. It is interesting to note how this process can be uncomfortable not just for them, but for us -- yet, the fact that they did express what seemed to be very genuine gratitude for the experience. Shireen mentioned it could be difficult for people to back down from a conversation out of fear or obligation. This is a reminder that we should keep in mind space in our conversation for the other part to back out at any time if it crosses their boundaries.*

**T [August 11th, 2016], IIT Student (5th year)**

1. **What motivates you?** Depends on what I need to motivated or inspired for. Somethings I don't need motivation. Things like my studies, fear motivates me.
2. **How do you deal with stress?** Mental stress I don't share with my parents because I don't want them to get stressed out. I tell my friends partially about my stress and it helps sort out the problems I have. I hold myself responsible sometimes for my parents happiness and I don't want to burden them. I think the process of sharing in itself can help with dealing with stress.
3. **Do you think there are enough mental health resources in India?** I read an article about depression and how it's actually a sign of evolution from committing suicide. Things like depression and ADHD are self-diagnosed and people will use it as an excuse. You won't be depressed unless you think you are depressed. I once cried in 12th standard because I felt the anxiety inside me.
4. **Why don't people talk about their mental health struggles openly?** No one shows their symptoms in public space. People are afraid of being judged or are sensitive about these issues. Also a lot of times your friends' reaction can help or worsen the problems you're having and people don't want to show weakness in public.

5. **How is faith a part of your life?** Up until 12th, I did whatever my parents did. I would go to the temple a few times a week with them. Now it really isn't a priority for me and I've started questioning why I did all that even back then. I don't dispute whether or not God exists, but at the same time I don't want to fully believe it.
6. **Does IIT have resources for their students regarding mental health?** On campus not really. The only thing would be the APEX body which helps out the first years. Friends become your support system. There are no explicit resources for students because people aren't as willing to go for professional help.

*Observations [Shireen]: T was really thorough with his answers. The way he answered these questions made it seem like he has looked into a few topics on his own that we discussed. I did share very similar views with him regarding faith.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: T was very ready and willing to share his experience with us. He made it clear to us that he implicitly thought through his inner world and challenges -- yet he also had an attitude that demonstrates he might not give weight to these experiences. So it was interesting to see that personal awareness might be there, but an acknowledgement or desire for systematic awareness does not necessarily follow.*

**Ab [August 11th, 2016], IIT student (1st year)**

1. **What motivates you?** I came here because I tries to. I want to make sure that all my work from the past 12 years will not go to waste. My parents worked really hard to give me a good education. I'm also interested in being here.
2. **Who inspires you?** My parents inspire me. I wasn't a high class student but I got into a good school. My dad was in a similar situation like this/
3. **What is your purpose in life?** I want to be something. I want to get into research. Maybe get a PhD and discover something. My other option is to try and start my own company or maybe even become a professor. At the same time I want to create some sort of organization that will combat child slavery.
4. **How do you deal with stress?** I love playing video games, football, volleyball- sports in general. I will speak to my friends and my relatives here in Hyderabad as well as my parents. They provide me a step that I can stand on/
5. **Are there sufficient resources in Saudi Arabia regarding mental health?** For x-pacts it's much more of a struggle. Saudi citizens have more benefits available to them. Right now my biggest anxiety is studies but its only been two weeks so I'm unsure if I'll be able to make it. I'll put in my own effort from my part and here there are enough resources.
6. **How is faith apart of your life?** I'm a practicing Muslim. I do namaz 5 times a day and go to the mosque on Friday. Religion gives people a purpose in life. God gave us all these resources so we have to utilize them. I feel energized after praying.
7. **How did you feel answering these questions?** It's nice to see people who take out their time for others and it's a good thing.

*Observations [Shireen]: Ab was really very genuine in his answers and I really enjoyed listening to his answers. I was almost inspired by how grateful he was for everything that he has.*

*Observations [Ranjeeth]: Ab's answers were heart-warming and sincere. He feels the great investment of time/energy/money he and his parents have made to get him this far. I feel he might not be fully prepared to roll with serious life challenges with his current perspective, as the college life might not go according to his ideals necessarily. Yet the genuinity and sincerity of his connection to parents and religion are inspiring. His gratitude to us for making time to talk with him was uplifting.*

*Symbiosis*

**Symbiosis Institute of Business Management**

***How do you think mental health awareness can be increased within corporations and businesses?***

- Start by educating children
- Teach stress management tips and tricks
- Interactive workshops- create a healthier work environment
- Have counselors on campuses or on staff
- Make a psych class mandatory in college