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EXPERT SPEAK

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‘Need more psychologists than doctors’

Globally the field of psychology is moving forward, but India seems to be still playing catch up. The subject is still among the eighth or ninth choice for students as a career option. Computer Science is most often number one.

There are many reasons for this I believe. In our country, people are not interested in visiting psychologists because there is still a lot of stigma around it. In the US, almost every family consults a psychologist so the scope is immense. Secondly, psychologists invariably do their job under psychiatrists and are called in only for psychometry tests. There is so much more to the field and people need to understand it. People with PhDs in psychology are only getting teaching jobs in colleges or nursing homes.

We require more psychologists than engineers and medical doctors. If mental health issues are taken care of there will be fewer medical issues as a number of diseases are psychosomatic in nature. We require one million psychologists at the very least in the country. And we lack in providing the right kind of education to them. Most of the psychology departments here are not equipped with scientific tests. Despite the rising awareness about mental health, we don't have neuropsychological laboratories, so students pursuing psychology are not able to relate to the people with mental health issues.

There are newer career prospects in the area of artificial intelligence, strategy, business, economics, but we need to give them the right foundation.

Behavioural science is all pervasive. In 2017, Richard H Thaler won the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel for his contribution to behavioural economics and for building “a bridge between the economic and psychological analyses of individual decisionmaking”. So that sums up the scope of the subject.