

Comment

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Minister of State for Work
don't really need on the roads. You find
emit bad smells. We want to protect pa

EDITORIAL

Let's have more mental health campaigns for our young people

The recent release of 2025 UACE results elicited the expected national attention, given its significance in the education sector. Sadly, such seasons can also be a harbinger of evil occasioned by his high stress and disappointment. Such was the case of a 20-year-old student, a resident of Kavumba Village, who allegedly took her life after reportedly becoming distressed upon receiving her A-Level examination results.

Residents of Kalwanga Village in Kyotera, where she was buried, alleged that the student may have taken her life after she missed the perfect 20-point score by just one point. They say she struggled to cope with remarks from some colleagues, who repeatedly taunted her about how she scored 19 instead of the perfect 20 points. This is such a tragic end to a life so young and so brilliant. It is said her dream was to become an engineer.

The issue:

Mental health

Our view:

The onus is not on parents or even on schools alone, but on every one of us. Let us be keen on the mental and emotional well-being of our young people.

After long and gruelling months of study and sacrifice, and managing to attain such a high score, this should have been a moment of celebration for her and her family. Sadly, many young people attempt to think of or even succeed in taking their lives due to various reasons. The 2024 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey report shows Uganda recorded 272,271 cases of suicidal thoughts, with 39,656 of the cases involving children aged 10-14, and another 36,615 cases in those aged 15-21, while 34,697 were from young adults aged 20-24 years.

For many young people, challenges such as academic pressure from parents and teachers, financial challenges, family conflicts, failed relationships, and bullying, among others, are usually the source of stress. While the core challenges remain the same, they may change form. Bullying might not be physical, but verbal or even emotional.

This is not to apportion blame but to again sound an alarm bell for all of us. This sad state of affairs calls for an urgent re-examination of how we deal with young people.

Their needs are far more than the tangible commodities that we as parents, guardians and schools work so hard to provide. The onus is not on parents or even on schools alone, but on every one of us. Let us be keen on the mental and emotional well-being of our young people. Listening and talking to a troubled young person might be all it takes to change their mind about taking their life. Listening intentionally means being mindful of cues that could lead to a life-threatening path.

Schools, too, must incorporate compulsory mental health and counselling programmes. These should not be for students who seek them but for everyone. Many times those who need help don't think they do, or don't reach out perhaps because of fear of stigma or mistrust. Such scenarios call for proactiveness.

Mental health programmes should not be thought of as extra-curricular programmes. While at it, let's educate ourselves on mental health for the young people around us and for ourselves.

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