

# Education to Enhance the Mental Health of Japanese Students



In the 1990s, Rwanda experienced a major tragedy many people suffered from mental illness, leading to various mental health issues within the country.

To address this, Rwanda places a strong emphasis on mental health education

**BUT**

## Mental Health Education



In our 総合探究 class, international students from the Global South who are enrolled in the Graduate School of Environmental Sciences at Hokkaido University visited our school. We have been studying their respective countries' cultures and the challenges they face, and engaged in discussions for a year.

This is Gloria Kamwezi from Rwanda

### Is Japan's mental health education sufficient? We can learn from the Global South!

	employed people	students	elementary school	junior high school	high school	unemployed people
2024	ALL 8,092 MALE 6,331 FEMALE 1,761	ALL 1,077 MALE 591 FEMALE 486	ALL 15 MALE 9 FEMALE 6	ALL 163 MALE 64 FEMALE 99	ALL 351 MALE 166 FEMALE 185	ALL 10,800 MALE 6,604 FEMALE 4,196
2023	ALL 8,858 MALE 7,063 FEMALE 1,795	ALL 1,019 MALE 572 FEMALE 447	ALL 13 MALE 5 FEMALE 8	ALL 153 MALE 73 FEMALE 80	ALL 347 MALE 181 FEMALE 166	ALL 11,466 MALE 6,827 FEMALE 4,639

Year-on-Year Comparison of Suicides by Occupation  
Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2025)

Despite being a developed country, Japan has seen an increase in youth suicides, raising concerns about the quality of mental health education.

The reason is that many causes of suicide—such as family or school problems—are difficult for young people to talk about, making simple communication often insufficient.

## こころの対話カード

This card game is an activity that encourages conversation using

- シチュエーションカード
- きもちカード
- リアクションカード

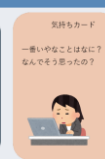
Players take turns drawing cards from the center pile. The person who draws, shares their own experiences or thoughts based on the card's content, while others respond using reaction cards. This is repeated several times.

Finally, all participants say in unison,  
“スッキリしたね。”

(Speaking in unison symbolizes uniting everyone's feelings!)

Through this activity, students can build new relationships and feel more comfortable sharing their feelings.

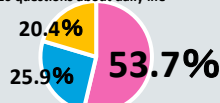
We hope this will help reduce youth suicide in Japan and support young people's healthy growth.



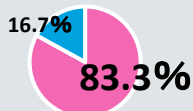
- Yes
- No
- Neither

Method N=835  
(junior high~ high school students)

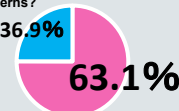
Overall response distribution across 20 questions about daily life



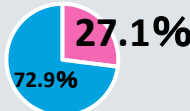
Can you directly convey your opinion to someone?



Are you able to talk to close friends about your worries and concerns?



Can you speak up without hesitation in class?



Japanese students have their opinions and can convey them to close friends, but not to others.

Based on these findings, we created a card game that helps students develop communication skills by discussing and sharing ideas in groups.

## Future Outlook

To improve this initiative, we plan to consult with our school counselor. We then intend to propose it to our principal and expand it to other schools, hoping to contribute to reducing youth suicide in Japan.