Creating a Trauma-Informed Learning Sanctuary for Students to Flourish
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Introduction: University students in Bangladesh increasingly face chronic stress stemming from academic pressure, financial insecurity, unstable living conditions, political clashes, and social uncertainty. This trauma ecology often places students in prolonged neurobiological survival states that impair attention, memory, emotional regulation, and learning. Contemporary neuroscience affirms that learning cannot occur without emotional and physiological safety.

Alongside global trauma-informed practice, Bengal's spiritual heritage offers a powerful ethical grounding. Lalon Shah's *"Sab Loke Koy Lalon Ki Jat"* (meaning People ask about caste, but the soul has no label) challenges labeling and exclusion, affirming the inherent dignity of the human soul beyond caste, status, or identity. Grounded in Dr. Mays Imad's trauma-informed pedagogy and resonant with Lalon's humanist vision, this initiative proposes a Trauma-Informed Learning Sanctuary to restore safety, belonging, and the conditions necessary for students to flourish academically and spiritually.

Selection Rationale: Dr. Mays Imad's framework is selected for its interdisciplinary foundation in neuroscience, psychology, and education, drawing on Polyvagal Theory, attachment theory, self-determination theory, and the Sanctuary Model. It emphasizes felt safety as a biological prerequisite for learning. In contexts where student distress is often stigmatized or moralized, this approach reframes education from deficit and blame to compassionate inquiry—asking not "What is wrong with the student?" but "What has the student experienced, and how can the learning environment respond?" This shift aligns closely with Lalon Shah's rejection of dehumanizing labels and affirms dignity as central to healing and learning. Mystical folk tradition suggest that healing begins when a wounded soul is seen, accepted, and gently guided back to its inner truth.

Application Strategy: The pilot will implement the **PFEC framework—Predictability, Flexibility, Empowerment, and Connection** in selected university classrooms. Predictability will be enhanced through transparent course structures, clear assessment timelines, and weekly "Now–Next–Later" planning. Flexibility will be introduced through coordinated deadlines, varied participation options, and adaptive classroom practices that maintain rigor without becoming punitive. Empowerment will be fostered by offering students meaningful choices in learning activities and assessment methods. Connection, central to both trauma-informed education and Lalon's philosophy, will be strengthened through peer-support circles, learning partners, and anchor-teacher relationships that emphasize belonging over performance. Faculty workshops and family engagement will support consistent, culturally responsive implementation.

Evaluation, Adaptation, and Sustainability: Effectiveness will be assessed through mixed methods, including pre- and post-intervention surveys measuring student stress, engagement, perceived safety, and belonging, alongside qualitative feedback from students and faculty. Continuous reflection through faculty learning communities and student check-ins will guide iterative refinement. Sustainability will be ensured by training faculty champions, embedding practices within existing academic structures, and generating local evidence to inform institutional policy and future scale-up.

Conclusion: Trauma creates change we do not choose; healing is about creating change we do choose (Rosenthal). By integrating PFEC into everyday teaching, this Trauma-Informed Learning Sanctuary can reduce student anxiety and burnout, improve engagement and learning, and strengthen teacher–student relationships. As Brené Brown notes, "We are wired for connection." Echoing this truth, Lalon Shah reminds us that healing begins when dignity is restored and belonging is affirmed—enabling students not merely to survive, but to flourish.