

**MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA**- Sneha Navneet & Nidhi Awasthi<sup>1</sup>**ABSTRACT**

A major concern across the world, which is rising day by day and its graph is increasing and affecting the lives of people, their relationships, their performance at work etc. As we all are going through a tough time that's the COVID pandemic across the world we are suggested to stay at home. And it's been a long time since we are quarantined and advised to work from home to prevent the spread of the virus. But the situation has affected the mental health of the people to a great extent. During these times more people are dealing with anxiety, stress, fear, over thinking, depression etc. And it has affected their personal development, their personal growth. Some people are just not even aware of what they are dealing and that's where the major problem is! We need to educate more and more people about these issues. In India, mostly people misunderstand or ignore or hesitate to share and talk about such issues and that makes the condition worse. And this was not the COVID pandemic, mental issues were always there. And there are many reasons of why people deal with such issues like the lack of good parenting, lack of counseling at school or colleges, lack of good guidance and healthy education system, increasing crime rate, gender discrimination. The Government of India launched the (NMHP) in 1982, keeping in view the heavy burden of mental illness in the community, and the absolute inadequacy of mental health care infrastructure in the country to deal with it''<sup>2</sup>. Further we will discuss about the mental health laws in our country. In India we have two mental health laws. First is, Mental Health Act 1987 and The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017

**Keywords:** Mental Health, COVID, India.

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<sup>2</sup>''[https://www.nhp.gov.in/national-mental-health-programme\\_pg](https://www.nhp.gov.in/national-mental-health-programme_pg)''

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**INTRODUCTION**

*“SADLY, TOO OFTEN, THE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH PREVENTS PEOPLE AROUND MENTAL HEALTH PREVENTS PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP FROM SEEKING IT. BUT THAT SIMPLY DOESN’T MAKE ANY SENSE. WHETHER AN ILLNESS AFFECTS YOUR ARM OR YOUR BRAIN, IT’S STILL AN ILLNESS.”*

- **MICHELLE OBAMA**

‘In Indian thought, human behavior has been explored at length. In post-vedic period, in Upanishads, Bhagwad Gita, Yogic and ayurvedic literature abnormalities of human behavior have been described and the treatise has been emphasized mainly through psychic changes. In India psychotherapy also needs to be based on cultural concepts and the prevailing belief system through centuries from generation to generation, which becomes more acceptable to the patient. If we accept psychotherapy as a interpersonal method of mitigating suffering, the process of change occurs in an individual through a psychotherapeutic relationship which has been described as the ‘guru- chela relationship’ in India, where in the wise offers advice to the pupil and helps him in relieving the suffering. This has been observed in Buddhist and Jain traditions too’<sup>3</sup>.

Dealing with any kind of mental issues is completely normal. But if we talk about our society, now also there are a lot of people who misunderstood it and do not accept such issues as an illness. This is because they need to be educated about these mental issues. For some the physical illness, which can be observed like a heart attack or a kidney failure, is true but when it comes to some mental issues, they just accept the fact that these kinds of issues exist. This is also one of the reasons of why mental cases are rising day by day. In some societies, if a person is dealing with some mental issues they are given a tag of ‘CRAZY’ or ‘INSANE’. But they do not understand the fact that mental issues are completely normal and depends person to person. As brain is also a part of our body and its completely normal to deal with these kinds of problems.

Mental health problems affect society as whole, not just a small, isolated segment. They are therefore a major challenge to our country to global development. The risk is higher among the

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<sup>3</sup> “<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3146223/>”

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poor, homeless, the unemployed, person with low education, victims of violence, migrants and refugees, indigenous populations, children and adolescents, abused women and elderly.

### **REASONS OF MENTAL DISORDER**

#### **➤ Family**

Family, from where get values, where we learn what's good and what's bad etc. It has a huge effect on an individual's personality and behavior. Maintaining a positive and disciplined environment is important. "When family relationships are stable and supportive, a person suffering from mental health issues or disorders may be more responsive to treatment. Companionship, emotional support and often even economic support can have a positive impact on someone coping with a mental health problem.

While some who suffer from mental health issues may require intense familial support, others may simply need help with transportation to get to treatment or the day-to-day companionship that most people require in times of need"<sup>4</sup>.

#### **➤ Childhood Abuse**

Abuse whether physical or mental can lead to lifelong mental health disorder. The individual will may experience fear, anxiety, stress. It completely affects the personality of person. A low self confidence, a fear to speak, and his or her performance at work, among the peer groups or among people can be affected. Abuses like, dealing with strict parents in childhood or unhealthy education system where teachers think it is completely normal to punish a child in whatever way they want to. But it severely affects the behavior of person and he will always feel like he's not good at anything. He feels insulted in front of whole class. It is a very common experience which almost everybody experiences in their childhood.

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<sup>4</sup>"<https://www.mentalhealthcenter.org/how-does-family-life-affect-mental-health/>"

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### ➤ Gender Based Discrimination

As we live in patriarchal, society we see a lot discrimination based on the gender of the person. According to that there's a huge impact of gender inequality especially on women's mental health. In many areas of our country we see males are given more preference than females. Females are not provided with good education, married at an early age, are asked give up on their dreams and focus on household works. Not only that, there are many other reasons like physical abuse or harassment, domestic violence, less pay for jobs at work place, their under representation in leadership position etc because of mostly females suffer from psychological disorders. Sexually abused woman deals with a lot of mental issues. And that affects their whole life and also most of the times disrespected and rejected by the society.

And yes men too suffer from such disorders too. We live in a society where men are expected to be strong, dominant. And that completely makes it harder for men to discuss and open up about their problems. Under all these societal pressure and family expectations, people ignore the mental disorders for men.

Talking about transgender, we all know how difficult it is for them to live a life where they are given an equal priority just like men and women. But in our society transgenders are not given much importance. That's why there are more health challenges faced by trans individuals. They are bullied for being a transgender, not accepted by society and their loved ones. They are not given an equal importance in education and many other sectors as well. This pain is what can lead to psychological disorders.

### ➤ Some Common Reasons

There are many other common reasons like:

- As we all know, the competition is rising day by day. Students who want to be the future doctors, engineers, lawyers etc take this competition to extreme. Unhealthy competition contributes to several very prominent negative mental health effects. Sometimes students who fail to achieve their goal feels underestimated and sometimes give up that leads to the mental health disorders from many students suffer. We might have seen in
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newspapers, students committing suicide, students dealing with depression etc that's just because of unhealthy competitive pressure.

- Drug abuse is also a major reason of why more people are dealing with mental disorders.
- People being quarantined in the times of covid lost interest and made them feel lonely.
- Criminals who do heinous crimes like rape, murder, or violence can also be categorized under mentally ill people. Because such people do not have a stable mindset that leads them to do such heinous crimes.
- Broken relationships, family issues or a trauma can easily lead to disorders like depression.
- Early recognition of people suffering from depressive chaos. We know that even in high income countries almost 50% of those suffering from depression are not identified. Early recognition means more effective treatment and avoidance of disability and death by suicide. Care in primary health service depressive disorder can be effectively treated, in most instances, with common and inexpensive medicines and simple psychosocial interventions. This is possible within primary health services with the provision of some basic training and appropriate medicines.

### HOW CAN WE HELP?

There are a lot of people struggling to overcome their mental issues but not everyone can afford the mental health services or ask for help! But there's no health without mental health. We need to be emotionally, physically and socially fit to lead a healthy and stable life. In these times where we are dealing with global pandemic many people have discovered many new ways to keep their mental health good.

- Firstly, we need to be completely aware of our mental health and try to ask for help from our family, friends, our loved ones whenever we feel a bit lonely or anxious. It is completely normal to feel something like that sometimes but we should ignore the feeling of not being okay. We should not hold ourselves to share our problems with someone close to you. We should always share the feeling of not being okay. Because holding the problem or ignoring it will make it bigger and can affect your work, your inner peace, For general queries or to submit your research for publication, kindly email us at [editorial@ijalr.in](mailto:editorial@ijalr.in)

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your relationships and your whole life negatively. So always keep a check on your mental health and always try to ask for help from your loved ones or from the mental health services we have in our country.

- WE NEED TO LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE HEARD. Sharing the problem is important but listening to them and assuring them that we are there for them is also important too. We should be available to the people whether they are close to us or not. We should help them in the best way we can and make them feel that they are not alone in the situation they are dealing with! That is why listening to them is also the most important part. Everybody deals with some kind of issues like that at some point of their life. So if we will listen to them and understand what they are going through, may be that will make them overcome their illness soon.
- People who think there's nobody who can understand their problem, their situation or the phases they are going to commit suicide. So assuring them that suicide is not the solution their problem we need to listen to their problem and help them as much as we can!
- Educating people about the mental health disorders is one of the most important part to help the people who are dealing with it. In many areas of our country people do not believe that such issue exists in real life. And they avoid talking about it too. But we need to make them understand that mental issues and physical issues both are equally important. We have studied about the physical processes that take place inside our body in school, colleges but nobody talks about that mental issues. Why? These are also the equally important issues like that of a kidney failure or a heart attack! We should be taught about the mental issues too in our schools. It works both ways, students will not feel pressurized by keeping a check on their mental health and can perform well in the education process.

Having a counseling session for parents, working people etc should be provided too. So they can better understand the issues which cannot be seen. Proper education about mental health must be provided to everyone irrespective of their age at their workplace, schools, colleges, through mass media, mental health counseling should be given an

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equal priority just like physical health. We should normalize talking about mental health in all the sectors, personal or professional.

- Parents, family members, teachers, friends and our closed ones should talk about these kinds of issues too
- We all know that family is the first place from where we learn manners, skills, attitude, difference between good and bad. Parents need to understand that to make their child a good human being, mental fitness is very important. If a child lives in a negative environment then his/her mental and physical growth are completely affected by it. Maintaining a positive environment can help him grow more. A person's attitude reflects his/ her upbringing. Like if we talk about criminals, why do they do such heinous crimes? Because that's how their upbringing is! So providing good values is also an important part of mental health. Parents should always see what their child is learning from their actions. For example, Children who witness domestic violence or are victims of abuse themselves are at serious risk for long-term physical and mental health problems. Children who witness violence between parents may also be at greater risk of being violent in their future relationships.
- A healthy education system. A child's second home, school! Teachers who think it is completely normal to punish the student in whatever way they can are wrong. Student may sometimes feel insulted, disrespected which completely affect his/her self confidence. Basically can lead to mental disorders. A healthy education system with mental health counseling should be provided at schools to educate students about it. Teacher's positive interaction with students is way more important especially for students who are dealing with some mental health issues.
- Sexually abused individuals, acid attack survivors' deals with mental issues a lot. A mental counseling is should be provided to them to overcome the trauma.
- Stopping the gender based discrimination and providing equal space, opportunity, respect and freedom to everyone irrespective of their genders will also help the people a mentally fit and happy life.

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- Drug abuse, one of the major problem of why are so many people dealing with mental issues. There is a way through which we can reduce the numbers of drug related cases by identifying the people around us those are facing the issues of drug addiction after identification we must help them by guiding for their positive mental development.
- Affordable and easily available mental health services to be provided for everyone. Providing mental health campaigns to a wide extent across the country is also required. Government should also encourage people to keep a check on their mental health by providing the best possible services in every part of the country. NGO's should organize mental health campaigns time to time for people's well being.

### **LAWS RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA**

In India, some laws related to mental health are:

**The Mental Health Act, 1987:** “An act to consolidate and amend the law relating to the treatment and care of mentally ill persons, to make better provision with respect to their property and affairs and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto”

The act was drafted in 1987 but came into effect in all the states and union territories of India in April 1993. This act replaces the the Indian Lunacy Act, 1912. The need of this act is to change the attitude of the society towards the mentally ill people and considerably realized that no stigma is attached to such illness. And every mentally ill person to be treated like other sick people.

**The Mental HealthCare Act , 2017:** “An Act to provide for mental healthcare and services for persons with mental illness and to protect, promote and fulfill the rights of such persons during delivery of mental healthcare and services and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.”

It was enacted by the parliament in the 68<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic of India.

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“In India, the Mental Health Care Act 2017 was passed on 7 April 2017 and came into force from 29 May 2018. The act effectively decriminalized attempted suicide which was punishable under Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code.”

## CONCLUSION

Mental and physical health both are equally important. So, we need keep a perfect balance between the two. Ignoring mental health can worsen the condition and can negatively affect the life of an individual. We need to share and openly speak about the mental issues. We need to listen to those who need to be heard. Giving up on life is not the only solution. We need to consider what the factors responsible for an unstable mental health are. And make the necessary changes required to change the chaotic situation where mental health cases are rising day by day. Mental health awareness is required. We need to educate more and more people about such issues so that they can identify, and help people who are dealing with it. A positive environment at home, schools, workplace, etc should be maintained for a healthy mental health. Affordable mental health services and increase in establishment of NGO's to organize mental health awareness campaigns. Considering that mental health is an important part of an individual's health we need to promote and volunteer to raise mental awareness through social media platforms as much as we can. In this way we can reach more and more people who need help but just because of some reasons cannot ask for help. Raising awareness will also encourage people to take action for their mental health too. Efforts from government institutions will help the population to a great extent. Proper counseling sessions through webinars can be arranged during the times of covid where people cannot go out but can stay home and maintain their mental health.

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