



## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS OF INDIA POPULATION

Priyanka Tamang<sup>1\*</sup>, Mehakpreet Singh<sup>2</sup>, Anjum<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

Mental health services are essential resources for individuals struggling with mental health conditions. The World Health Organization (WHO) describes mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their own potential, can cope with normal life stressors, work productively, and contribute to the society. However, approximately one-third of the total population experiences mental health disorders at some point in their lives, according to WHO. Access to quality mental health services is crucial in addressing the global mental health crisis. Mental health services comprise of a wide range of interventions, including counseling, medication management, and supportive services. Counseling services are often the first line of defense in addressing mental health issues. In addition to counseling and medication management, supportive services play a significant role in mental health services.

Case management services help patients navigate the healthcare system and access other supportive resources such as housing, food banks, and employment services, among others. Peer support and peer counseling services can help patients connect with others who have lived experience with mental health issues and provide emotional support and guidance. Access to quality mental health services is often hindered by a variety of factors such as stigma, lack of insurance coverage, and shortage of mental health providers. However, there are different initiatives and policies in place that aim to enhance access to mental health services. One example is the Affordable Care Act, which included mental health and substance use disorder treatment as essential health benefits. This law has resulted in an increased number of people gaining access to mental health services.

**Keywords:** Mental Health, Psychiatric Disorder, Health Services

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<sup>1\*</sup>Student of Bachelor's of Psychology, Lovely Professional University

<sup>2</sup>Student of Bachelor's of Psychology, Lovely Professional University

<sup>3</sup>Student of Bachelor's of English, Lovely Professional University

**\*Corresponding Author:** Priyanka Tamang

\*Student of Bachelor's of Psychology, Lovely Professional University

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## INTRODUCTION

Mental health services are resources provided to individuals who are experiencing mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, or stress. These services include counseling services, psychotherapy, medication management, and support groups. Mental Health services can be provided in a variety of settings, including psychosocial clinics, hospitals, private practices, and community centers. The equal access to mental health services is crucial as untreated mental health conditions can have a significant impact on a person's quality of life. Seeking help from mental health professionals can provide individuals with the tools and support they need to manage their symptoms in order to improve their mental health conditions and achieve their goals. The mental health services should be personalized to the individual's needs, preferences, and circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the global mental health situation, and those affected by the pandemic, either directly or indirectly, need help. Check out our course on psychological first aid to find out more (Fran, 2021).

Nearly 792 million people across the world lived with mental health issue, constituting 10.7% of the global population. Nearly 284 million people of them had anxiety and followed by 264 million people who had depression (Fran, 2021). Another report estimated that mental disorders are attributable to 14.3% of deaths worldwide, which is approximately 8 million deaths each year (Walker, 2015). According to the World Health Organization (2023). Depression can lead to suicide, which contributes to over 700,000 deaths every year. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29-year age groups. Despite being effective treatments for mental health disorders still more than 75% of people in low-middle-income countries never receive treatment for it. Similarly, during COVID-19 pandemic the global prevalence of mental health issues was higher than before the pandemic. Although estimates may vary between countries for mental health issues but it includes psychological distress (50.0%), stress (36.5%), depression (28.0%), sleep disturbance (27.6%), anxiety (26.9%) and post-traumatic stress symptoms (24.1%) (Fran, 2021). In India the burden of mental and behavioral disorders ranged from 9.5-102 per 1000 people. Various studies had shown that the prevalence of mental disorders is high among some population groups like females, elderly, disaster survivors, industrial workers, children, adolescent and those having chronic medical conditions. They need to

have better living conditions, political commitment, primary health care to ensure the better quality of life.

In India, the mental health services have come a long way in recent years, but still there is a long way to go to meet the people's requirement in India. These services have traditionally been stigmatized in country, which has made it difficult for people to seek help whenever they need it. On the other hand, very less people have awareness and accepted mental health as general health issues. Meanwhile, the Government of India has taken various progressive steps to improve mental health services in country. The mental health disorders are among the leading causes of disability worldwide (Rehm and Shield, 2019). The prevalence of these mental health disorder is high due to treatment gap, which is used to refer the difference between the people who are suffering with mental illnesses and those who are actually receiving mental health care. This gap is widening in low-income countries (Rehm and Shield, 2019). The treatment gap is more than 50% in most countries, but it is more than 90% in the low-income countries (Patel, Maj, Flisher, et al, 2010). Kohn and Puac-Polanco (2018) found that the weighted mean for the treatment gap in North America for moderate to severe mental disorders is 65.7%. Additionally, primary care providers are able to deliver mental health care to up to 60% of patients with a psychiatric disorder (Butler DJ, Fons D, Fisher T, et al, 2018) they should be included in health strategy to improve the health care of people.

### Defining Mental Health Issues

Mental health problems are very common worldwide. It is challenging for them to move on when they are dealing with mental health issues. It comprises the unpleasant emotions and thoughts that people experience occasionally, such as moments of sadness, hopelessness, and fear. Mental health issues are not a sign of weakness, rather, they are merely reactions to the things that are and have occurred to us and those around us. For instance, people might encounter "anxiety," which is a common feeling of tension, worry, and fear. This could have an impact on how well people sleep, consume, work, study, interact with others in our lives, and use alcohol and other drugs. Unless they express their feelings to others, it is difficult to understand how they feel. We can overcome issues like these and stop them from becoming more serious or lasting by seeking assistance from others and taking care of our mental health. If it is feasible, altering our lives to address the problems

that are causing us to feel depressed will also be beneficial. Most people who experience mental health issues are able to overcome them or adapt to their situation, particularly if they seek assistance at an early stage.

We may experience more severe anguish and life-related issues as a result of some mental health issues, which can last for years. Conflicts with other people can result from, for example, hearing and seeing things that others are unable to see or thinking that others are trying to harm us. We might as a result lose our jobs, relationships, kids, or housing and even our liberty and lives.

There are various types of disorders and psychological issues under mental health, including Anxiety Disorder, Mood Disorders, Psychotic Disorders, Eating Disorders, Impulse control and addiction disorders, Personality Disorders, OCD Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Stress Response Syndromes, Dissociative Disorders, and others.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Global Mental Health

In order to "raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilise efforts in support of mental health," *the World Health Organization (WHO) sponsors World Mental Health Day on October 10.*

The Special Initiative for Mental Health was launched by the WHO in 2020. With an objective to improve access to mental health services for 100 million people across 12 countries, including Zimbabwe, Jordan, and the Ukraine, it is one of the WHO's most comprehensive mental health programmes to date. Since the initiative began in January 2020, 5 million more individuals have had access to mental health and psychosocial support since the initiative's launch in January 2020, according to the WHO. Establishing networks around those in need, frequently through family and neighbourhood institutions, is known as psychosocial support.

Global mental health is a developing area of study and practise that aims to lessen mental suffering by preventing, treating, and caring for mental and substance use disorders as well as by promoting and maintaining the mental health of people and communities around the globe. Equity is a top priority for global mental health, which is influenced by a wide range of fields, including neuroscience, genomics, social sciences (particularly psychology, medical anthropology,

and sociology), epidemiology, and study on health services and implementation science. In order for communities, health systems, and policymakers to implement evidence-based policies and plans, advocacy plays a crucial part in its dissemination.

Historians will recognise the unavoidable truth of global interconnectedness when looking back on 2020. Every nation had seen the COVID-19 pandemic's negative impacts on people's physical, mental, and social well-being. The COVID-19 mortality disparities and the ongoing structural and physical violence will serve as reminders for some of the pent-up anger, sadness, and frustration caused by decades of social injustice, exclusion, racism, and discrimination. It will not be disputed that these events have an emotional influence or longer-lasting effects on mental health. It is debatable whether social, clinical, political, or a combination of answers are the best ones to give to them. Such inquiries are perfectly suited to the area of international.

In order to solve complex issues through a diversity of viewpoints, global mental health acknowledges and values the world's immense interconnectedness. Despite the fact that different social, political, historical, and economic forces shape day-to-day life, it works under the premise that pain and happiness are shared aspects of our humanity and that taking collective action can be fruitful.

### A Global Crisis

According to the study, almost 1 billion people globally, or about 1 in 8 people, suffer from a mental health disorder. A leading cause of adolescent death, suicide accounts for one fatality out of every 100. However, low- and middle-income nations only invest 1% of their national health budgets, and governments spend only 2% on mental health services. In a nation with at least 200 000 individuals, one psychiatrist is needed for every half of the population. According to the study, mental health professionals for children and adolescents are "almost non-existent" in many low- and middle-income nations. The new report represents the WHO's most recent effort to spur international action to enhance mental health treatment. A thorough mental health action plan was published by the organisation in 2013 after its first World Mental Health report was issued in 2001. The action plan placed a strong emphasis on moving treatment away from long-term inpatient facilities and towards community-based strategies integrated with primary care. Additionally, it supported increased preventative measures,

information tracking systems, and a doubling of mental health study.

The action plan's deadline was pushed back from 2020 to 2030 due to slow worldwide implementation progress. According to the WHO's 2020 Mental Health Atlas, only about half of WHO member states have their mental health policies in line with international human rights standards or have implemented the suggested national mental health standards. Consequently, the report claims that the majority of individuals who are suffering from mental illness do not receive care. One in seven people who have insanity, for instance, receives no treatment. Multiple low- and middle-income countries, essential psychotropic drugs are often unavailable or unaffordable.

According to the study, care is primarily provided in long-term psychiatric hospitals in many nations. In these environments, where residents are frequently detained against their will and might encounter overcrowding, unhygienic conditions, or insufficient nutrition, many people report human rights violations. In comparison to physical health care, almost every nation in the world has fallen short on providing mental health care.

Laws that restrict access to tools used in suicide, such as banning access to firearms or hazardous substances or building safety barriers to stop people from jumping, can also have a significant effect. According to the report, prohibiting extremely dangerous pesticides, which are responsible for one-fifth of all suicides worldwide, helped Sri Lanka reduce its annual suicide rate by 70% between 1984 and 2016. The study also places a focus on social determinants of health and how conflicts and displacement may affect mental health.

Governments must collaborate with other industries to create more supportive systems. According to the study, workplaces and schools are important because they have the power to improve or impair mental health. Bullying, stress, racism, or discrimination at school can have crippling effects because the majority of mental health conditions manifest by puberty. However, integrating social and emotional learning into the classroom can assist students in managing stress, being aware of their surroundings, learning problem-solving skills, developing good relationships, and expressing their opinions in a respectful and clear manner. Schools can also be a very useful tool for parents who are trying to create a nurturing atmosphere at home.

#### **Mental Health Services in India:**

**National Mental Health Program:** The Indian government launched the National Mental Health

Program in 1982 with the aim of improving mental health services in the country. The program provides community-based mental health services, psychiatric treatment, and counselling services to people with mental health problems.

**Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** In 2017, India passed the Mental Healthcare Act, which aims to protect the rights of people with mental illness and ensure access to quality mental health services. The act also decriminalizes suicide and prohibits electroconvulsive therapy without anesthesia.

#### **Availability of Mental Health Professionals:**

There is a shortage of mental health professionals in India, with only one psychiatrist for every 100,000 people. However, the government is working to increase the number of mental health professionals by training more psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers.

#### **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):**

There are many NGOs in India that provide mental health services to marginalized populations. These organizations focus on providing counselling, psychotherapy, and other mental health services to people who may not have access to traditional mental health services.

**Telemedicine:** Telemedicine is becoming increasingly popular in India, and it is being used to provide mental health services to people in remote and underserved areas. Telemedicine enables mental health professionals to provide counselling and psychotherapy via phone or video conferencing.

#### **Mental Health Services**

Mental health services refer to the range of professional services and interventions aimed at promoting and maintaining mental health, preventing, and treating mental illnesses, and supporting individuals with mental health conditions to achieve optimal functioning and quality of life. Mental health services can include counselling, psychotherapy, medication management, peer support, case management, rehabilitation, and other types of interventions.

#### **Research on mental health services covers a wide range of topics, including:**

Effectiveness of different types of mental health services: Researchers have investigated the effectiveness of different types of mental health services, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, psychoeducation, and medication, in treating various mental health conditions, including



depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder.

**Access to mental health services:** Research has also explored the barriers that individuals face in accessing mental health services, such as stigma, lack of insurance coverage, and shortages of mental health professionals in certain areas.

**Integration of mental health services into primary care:** Another area of research has focused on integrating mental health services into primary care settings to improve access to care and provide more coordinated and comprehensive care for individuals with mental health conditions.

**Cultural competence in mental health services:** Researchers have also investigated the cultural factors that affect mental health and the importance of cultural competence in providing effective mental health services to individuals from diverse backgrounds.

**Cost-effectiveness of mental health services:** Finally, research has explored the cost-effectiveness of different types of mental health services and interventions, as well as the economic burden of mental illness on individuals, families, and society as a whole.

Overall, research on mental health services plays an important role in advancing our understanding of the best ways to promote and maintain mental health, prevent and treat mental illness, and support individuals with mental health conditions to live fulfilling lives.

#### Mental Health Related Studies

There are many different studies that focus on mental health. Some of these studies aim to better understand mental health conditions like anxiety disorders, depression, and bipolar disorder, while others focus on developing treatments and interventions for these conditions.

Here are some studies in the field of mental health.

**1. Epidemiological studies:** These studies examine the prevalence and incidence of mental health disorders in different populations, while others explore the effectiveness of different treatments such as medication or therapy. Here are a few examples of mental health studies:

- The National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R) is a large-scale study that surveyed over 9,000 participants about their mental health conditions and treatment. It found that 26% of

participants had a mental disorder in the past year, and that anxiety disorders were the most common.

- The Recovery After an Initial Schizophrenia Episode (RAISE) study was a multi-site research project that aimed to improve outcomes for people experiencing first-episode psychosis. It found that coordinated specialty care (CSC) was more effective than typical care in reducing symptoms and improving functioning.
- The Treatment for Adolescents with Depression Study (TADS) was a randomized controlled trial that compared the effectiveness of medication, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and a combination of both in treating adolescent depression. It found that a combination of medication and CBT produced the best outcomes.
- The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is a survey-based research project that explores the link between childhood trauma and later health outcomes. It has found that people who experienced more ACEs (such as abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction) have a higher risk of developing mental health disorders as well as other physical health problems.
- The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program is a mindfulness-based intervention that has been studied extensively for its effects on mental health. One meta-analysis of MBSR studies found that it was effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress.

Also investigate risk factors and protective factors associated with mental health. Epidemiological studies can help identify patterns and trends in mental health and inform public health policies and healthcare resources to improve mental health outcomes.

**2. Clinical trials:** Clinical trials are designed to test the safety and efficacy of new treatments or interventions for mental health conditions. These trials typically involve human participants who are randomly assigned to receive either the treatment being interventions aimed at promoting mental well-being and preventing mental illness. For example, a study may investigate the correlation between socioeconomic status and mental health outcomes or the impact of childhood trauma on adult mental health. These studies test the efficacy and safety of new treatments, medications, and therapeutic interventions for mental health conditions. Clinical trials may involve comparing a new medication to a placebo or comparing different types of interventions to determine which

is most effective. These trials help healthcare professionals develop evidence-based practices for treating mental illness and improving overall mental health outcomes.

**3. Neuroimaging studies:** These studies use imaging technologies like MRI and PET to investigate the structure and function of the brain in individuals with mental health conditions. Neuroimaging studies can provide insights into the biological and neurological mechanisms underlying mental illness, which can inform the development of new treatments and interventions.

**4. Cross-cultural studies:** These studies compare mental health and illness across different cultures and societies to identify similarities and differences in the presentation and treatment of mental health conditions. Cross-cultural studies can help to develop a deeper understanding of mental health and promote the development of culturally sensitive interventions.

**5. Longitudinal studies:** These studies follow individuals over time, often into adulthood, to investigate the long-term impact of mental health conditions and the effectiveness of interventions. Longitudinal studies can provide insights into how mental health conditions develop and progress and identify risk and protective factors that influence mental health outcomes over the lifespan.

Some studies of mental health services aim to evaluate the effectiveness of different treatment modalities for various mental health conditions. For example, randomized controlled trials (RCT) may compare the benefits of medication, psychotherapy, or a combination of both for treating depression, anxiety, or schizophrenia. Other studies may aim to identify factors that contribute to disparities in access to mental health services or disparities in outcomes among different demographic groups) may be conducted to compare different types of therapy or medications for depression, anxiety, or other mental health disorders. Other studies may focus on the accessibility and availability of mental health services, identifying gaps in care and barriers to treatment for certain populations. For example, research may explore the experiences of individuals with low income or members of marginalized communities in accessing mental health services. Additionally, studies may investigate the impact of policy changes on mental health care delivery, such as the implementation of teletherapy services or changes in insurance coverage for mental health treatment. The results

of these studies can inform policy decisions, improve mental health services for patients, and advance our understanding of effective treatments for mental health conditions.

Overall, the field of mental health research is vast and multifaceted, and these studies represent just a few examples of the kinds of research being conducted to better understand and improve mental health outcomes.

Although mental health is just as crucial to well-being as physical health is, it is also the health issue that gets the least attention. A National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) was mandated by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1979. India was one of the first nations to do so in 1982. In 1987, India passed the Public Psychological Wellness Act to manage more complicated issues of dysfunctional behavior.

### Effects Of Covid On Mental Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health worldwide. Some of the effects of COVID-19 on mental health include:

**Increased anxiety and depression:** Fear of contracting the virus, job loss, financial strain, and social isolation have contributed to increased anxiety and depression.

**Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** Healthcare workers and those who have recovered from COVID-19 may experience PTSD.

**Substance abuse:** COVID-19 has led to increased alcohol and drug abuse as people try to cope with stress and anxiety.

**Domestic violence:** Lockdowns and social isolation have led to increased incidents of domestic violence.

**Eating disorders:** People who have been impacted by COVID-19 may develop eating disorders due to stress and anxiety.

**Suicide:** COVID-19 has led to an increase in suicide rates due to the social isolation, financial difficulties, and uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

It is important to prioritize mental health during these difficult times. Seeking professional help, staying connected with loved ones, and engaging in self-care activities such as exercise and mindfulness can all help mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on mental health.

## Conclusion

Mental health is a crucial aspect of overall well-being that affects individuals of all ages, genders, and cultures worldwide. Mental health disorders are prevalent and can significantly impact an individual's mood, behavior, and thinking. Effective mental health treatment can reduce symptoms, improve functioning, and enhance quality of life. However, there are several challenges to providing effective mental health care, including stigma surrounding mental health issues, limited resources for mental healthcare, and a shortage of trained mental health professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the global mental health crisis, making it more important than ever to prioritize mental health services and support. Governments, healthcare providers, and society as a whole must work together to reduce the stigma around mental health and increase access to mental health services. By doing so, we can improve the lives of millions of individuals worldwide and create a healthier, more resilient society.

It is important to recognize that mental health is not just the absence of mental illness but also includes the presence of positive emotions, resilience, and the ability to cope with challenges. Taking care of mental health should be a part of daily life, just like physical health. This can include engaging in activities that promote positive emotions, such as exercise, meditation, and spending time with loved ones. It is also important to address the social determinants of mental health, such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to education and healthcare. These factors can contribute to the development of mental health disorders and make it harder for individuals to access treatment.

Furthermore, mental health care should be integrated into primary healthcare services to increase access and reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health treatment. Mental health education and awareness should also be a part of school curriculums and workplace training programs to promote a culture of understanding and support.

Mental health is essential for creating a healthier and more equitable society. By addressing the challenges to effective mental health care, promoting positive emotions and resilience, and addressing social determinants of mental health, we can improve the lives of individuals worldwide and build a more resilient society.

In addition to the above, it is important to recognize that mental health is interconnected with other aspects of our lives, including physical health,

relationships, and work. Therefore, addressing mental health requires a holistic approach that takes into account all of these factors.

Furthermore, addressing workplace stress and promoting work-life balance can also improve mental health outcomes. This includes providing resources and support for employees to manage stress and prioritize self-care.

In short, addressing mental health requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account all aspects of our lives. By promoting physical health, building strong relationships, and addressing workplace stress, we can create a society that prioritizes mental health and well-being for all.

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