

# CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND METHODS TO IMPROVE IT

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**Abstract** - This paper briefs about what is mental health? Stigmas that revolve around mental health. It argues that mental health if not given attention to or taken care of can cause serious issues in the quality of one's life. It also puts forward how mental health is prioritized through ages. Mental health is often attached to mental illness or mental disorders. They can be very traumatizing for a person and can have serious effects on their body. Considering minor body changes from weight gain to weight loss. People may experience major health conditions, even heart strokes. Because of the minimal awareness, the mental issues are unaddressed causing a major impact on people who are suffering with these conditions. As we believe in "sound mind, sound body" is a way to a healthy, harmonious life. We must step forward for a society with individuals completely aware of these issues and thrive towards a better quality life by getting these illnesses treated regardless of the stigmas based around them.

**Key Words:** Mental health, stigmas, quality of life, minimal awareness.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

What is mental health? A question that's been often misunderstood or misinterpreted. In a nutshell, Mental health is how you think, behave and feel. As simple as this sounds it's often very complex to deal with because when we consider physical health we often see symptoms which are noticeable. But a person can be going through stress, anxiety, sleep disorders and can still seem fine to people but might be battling to stay sane every single day. You may never know what they are dealing with. The roots of mental health began during "The mental hygiene movement". This movement was a reflection of Clifford beer's work and his experiences in mental hospitals. It was primarily for improving the care of people with mental disorders. Later on, more milder forms of mental disorders were also considered and efforts were made for early diagnosis of such issues as well. People often going through such problems refuse to seek help and that leads to putting themselves through it alone and worsening the condition. Often looking out for one's mental health can affect their quality of their life. Mental health denotes not only the conditions people are born with or actual defects in their body. It is also something people go through on a day to day basis. Conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression can affect a person and his routine. These days the word anxiety and depression have been normalized so much that their true meaning is almost a lost cause. The world is changing constantly and putting humans in a constant position for them to adapt to that change. This transition can

be quite Stressful without even a person realizing it. The stigmas attached to mental health are many. "It's all in your head". Most of us must have heard this so many times that you stop voicing what you are going through. To all the people out there, "Just because you don't feel it or know it, doesn't Mean it's not there". Most of the times a person failing to express what he is going through can lead to dangerous situations which may pose a threat to their lives often leading to suicidal thoughts. While mental illnesses are serious, some can be treated after the diagnosis but others Such autism, schizophrenia needs higher levels of attention and care with a strong support system. Mental health can be taken care of by us. In order to do that we must do certain things such as talking about our feelings instead of letting things piling up. Eating well and an active lifestyle such as working out can be helpful in keeping our mind sound. One of the major things about mental health is when a person is going through something they must feel validated and safe when they are about to express their emotions. The person listening must constantly make them feel such way by reassuring them that they will be okay and it is okay to feel such way. This is a healthy way of coping with things and these ways must prevail more. The ways that people can spread such awareness is further discussed in detail. In an era of various technological advances made for a better standard of living it's a shame that our mental health of all which effects the standard of living is least prioritized.

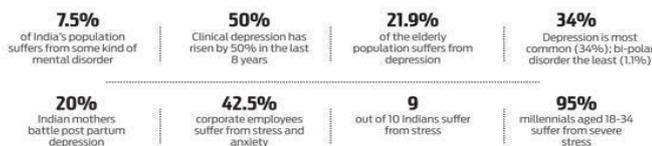
## 2. WHY HAS THE CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH NOT BEEN WIDESPREAD IN INDIA?

Mental health is a serious concern worldwide and India is not far behind sharing this. Though the developmental pace in this area appears to be slow. As statistics prove that about 14% of the global burden of disease is attributed to neuropsychiatric disorders. But prioritizing this has been left behind. India being a developing country may have existing public health priorities but physical health definitely takes over the priority over mental health. Though the emergence of mental hospitals separately and psychiatry wards in hospitals have been taking place. The step towards complete development isn't taking place rapidly. Because of this under developments, the stigma around this concept has been rigid and the concept itself has not been thoroughly explored. The WHO has defined sustainable development goals and elaborated the impact of mental illnesses and suicide on them. The suicide rate in India in 2015 at 15.7/100,000 is higher than the regional average of 12.9 and the global average of 10.6. Suicide is the leading cause of death among those aged 15-29 in India. There remains a massive

unaddressed need within the population. This also causes a treatment gap. This measures the time frame between the prevalence of the mental illnesses and the treatment. One of the major reasons for this cause is less availability of resources, awareness of the illnesses and the number of professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses and social workers also. According to WHO, in 2011, there were 0.301 psychiatrists and 0.047 psychologists for every 100,000 patients suffering from a mental health disorder in India. These issues aggravate the scale of the problem and need immediate redressal.

The second most important thing is sensitivity of this issue in India. People often suffering with mental health issues are treated to be lunatics by the society. This treatment of people in the society can lead to people dealing with mental issues feeling shameful about their condition, often leading to refusal of seeking any sort of help. Although India being the world's fifth largest economy, It has spent only 0.05 % of its annual health budget on mental health over the last few years, much lower than even the average spending of low-income countries, which comes to about 0.5 percent of their healthcare budgets. Furthermore, India has 9,000 psychiatrists, or one doctor for every 100,000 people. The desirable number of psychiatrists is 3 for every 100,000 people. This means India has a shortage of 18,000 mental health doctors. Apart from the unused funds set aside in its budget for mental health, the government hasn't organized any major awareness programs even on World Mental Health Day. But was actively celebrating International Yoga Day, spending almost 345 million rupees on its name. What the government is failing to understand is that mental health actually correlates positively with a country's economic growth. Considering the example a man who is unemployed has mental health issues such as depression, stress for not having a job and not being able to look after his family. Thus economic loss or downfall of employment can lead to a mental crisis. Putting behind the economic issues, the government is obligated to look after people's mental health under the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability (2007), to which India is a signatory. The "Right to Life" has been interpreted by the Supreme Court as not just safeguarding the mere act of breathing or existing but ensuring the quality of life and human dignity.

**Mental health illness stats**



**3. MAJOR CAUSES OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

There are three major factors that cause mental illness they are:

- **BIOLOGICAL FACTORS:** Biological factors are a major reason that causes mental defects. People

born with defects in the brain or improper functioning of neurological connections can result in such defects other biological factors include Genetics which is heredity. Some diseases run in families which mean the person's ancestors might have this illness and the next generations have chances likely to get this illness. The main reason behind this is linked to abnormalities in genes and other factors might also trigger these diseases. Infections can be linked to brain damage and also the development of mental illnesses or worsening the symptoms of already existing disease. Prenatal damage which means the disruption of brain development in fetal stages or any trauma caused during childbirth or pregnancy can cause such illnesses. Long term substance abuse in particular has been linked to anxiety, depression and paranoia.

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS:** These include any sort of emotional, physical trauma or sexual abuse. This can be triggered by loss of loved ones at an early age. Poor ability to relate to social situations or act with others can also be a reason behind this.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:** Many environment or surrounding factors can trigger an illness in a person who is susceptible to particular illness. They include Death, divorce, dysfunctional family life, Feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, anxiety, anger issues or loneliness. Frequent change in the environment can also make a person congested to adapt quickly. Social and cultural expectations can also lead to disorders such as eating disorders.

**4. LIST OF MENTAL ILLNESS OR DISORDERS**

- Depression causes a person to lose all his interest in activities, also causes mood swings which leads to significant impairment in one's life.
- Anxiety which causes fear in one's mind thereby leads to a feeling of worry and fear strong enough to interfere in daily life.
- Bipolar disorder is also caused by stress which causes mood swings ranging from very depressed to manic highs usually this treatment is taken for a lifetime.
- Dementia, a disease which causes a person's nerve cells in the brain to get affected and deteriorate which might lead to vision impairment, loss of communication skills or memory loss.
- Ocd (obsessive compulsive disorder) causes a person to perform repetitive tasks and compulsions that might also severely damage the brain cells and affect day to day life.
- Autism, a serious developmental disorder that causes a person to lose his ability to communicate and interact this is also one of the most common diseases caused by mental illness. It is most likely to appear in children of age ranging between 12

and 18 the treatment process for this will be a lifetime and it causes many other complications.

- Schizophrenia is a serious mental disorder which causes the person to act abnormally it may lead to them being violent on some occasions the person with schizophrenia may also experience hallucinations, delusions it results in lack of thinking ability.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder also known as PTSD which results in a person not being able to forget a terrifying event or recover from an event there are 5 stages of ptsd

- Denial
- Confusion
- Flashback
- Nightmares
- Hopelessness
- Sadness

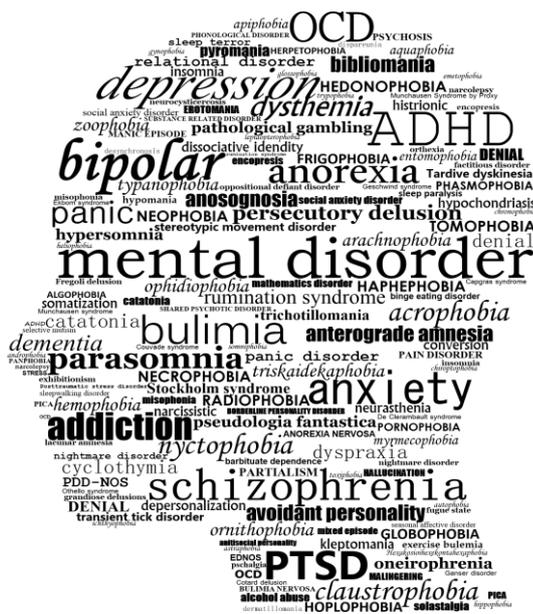


Fig -1: Diseases caused by mental health issues

### 5. MEASURES TO BE TAKEN FOR RESOLVING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

The first and foremost way of leading forward through this mental health crisis is spreading awareness. With rising awareness of mental health will lead to early diagnosis of the problem and also growing access for the treatment also followed by adopting preventive measures. The awareness must be done through various platforms in various ways. They are as follows:

- Government programs and policies: With the power vested in government by the people. It has the highest chance in changing the society and making amends. Also the

government being the biggest single spender on the mental health sector. It's interventions in spreading awareness can make a huge impact. This public health system through implementing programs and campaigns of awareness can reach to rural of rural masses. The need of the hour is to provoke masses to learn about mental health through campaigns like Swatch Mansikta Abhiyan. This will help them address mental issues in a timely and effective manner and live a stress-free life. The campaign will also encourage people to talk about their mental well-being and reach out to a therapist or psychiatrist, in case they need to do so. The awareness must be given to the ones that have no access to media or any form of informative device. The roots will thus be strengthened. Apart from the National and District mental health programs and The National Rural Health Mission, The government is also partnering with private and non-profitable organizations to intervene into much deeper levels of spreading awareness. If this rate of implementations increases rapidly India might be able to achieve a better level of understanding on such mental issues and finally break itself through all the stigmas revolving around it.

- Education system: Students are to be taught about mental health by inclusion of such topics in their textbooks and as a part of their school or college curriculum. Students exposed to such sensitive issues at a young age can lead to a better understanding and also helps them to deal with people with mental health issues in a proper way. With young minds learning such issues at a young age will lead to de-stigmatization, removing discrimination and creates a much more sense of empowerment.

- Internet and social media platforms: Our world is dominated by technology and devices. The social media and web is such a power device to spread a word and are truly a game changers in spreading awareness. Internet trends are a great way for reaching people and making them participate in it. A better understanding and much better awareness can be spread. With utilization of such platforms, we can be able to reach the current youth who play a key role in de-stigmatization and making a change for better. The Internet can also be used for self help websites and also can be reached out for help on these toll free numbers or websites with chat sections. Online help support groups can also be a great way for therapy sessions.

### 6. CONCLUSION

A healthy lifestyle, safe living environment and active participation in society as well as the community is a key to sound mental health. Considering the seriousness of mental health issues and the minimal awareness of the issues. Efforts must be made and measures must be taken for awareness through the various methods mentioned above. Active efforts will help in rapid development of the mental health sector which will lead to developments and innovation for diagnosing the diseases and also better

treatment plans. Considering that most of the earlier strategies to enhance mental health have not succeeded over the past. Mental health awareness can become both the means and the way of ending stigmas and bundling on something healthy and efficient. Government policies based on evidence-based approaches, active media involvement, a systematic educational system, utilization of new technologies might together help in fighting against mental illnesses. With mental health issues being difficult to understand and study. Funds and labs must be allocated for the research and broaden the knowledge of the field. Trails must be started by the government to experiment on finding a treatment or a cure for the diseases which are much serious and currently have no scope of any treatment. The time has come for the dire need of these implementations and extraordinary measures to eliminate mental health crisis.

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