

## Mental Health: A Social Dilemma

**\*Dr. Urmil Mahalawat**

### ABSTRACT

In today's growing world everyone must have come across the word "mental health" quite frequently. But what is this mental health? How is it different from normal health? How does it affect a person's functioning? In India how common is it? How to identify it? And how to deal with it? These basic yet not so easy questions have been tried to be covered in the below written paper for awareness about the society.

**KEYWORDS:** Health, disease, wellbeing, society, depression, anxiety, phobia, mood, schizophrenia, disability, diet, exercise, social

### INTRODUCTION

What is health? Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. But people are aware about the fact that health has these many aspects. People in order to keep their physical health intact tend to forget about the mental well being. But in order to study about the mental health we must know that what exactly is mental health.

### MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development.

Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. It exists on a complex continuum, which is experienced differently from one person to the next, with varying degrees of difficulty and distress and potentially very different social and clinical outcomes.

Mental health conditions include mental disorders and psychosocial disabilities as well as other mental states associated with significant distress, impairment in functioning, or risk of self-harm. People with mental health conditions are more likely to experience lower levels of mental well-being, but this is not always or necessarily the case.

The WHO states that mental health is "more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities." Peak mental health is not only about managing active conditions but also looking after ongoing wellness and happiness. According to WHO the burden of mental health problems in India is 2443 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) per 100 00 population; the age-adjusted suicide rate per 100

---

**Mental Health: A Social Dilemma**

*Dr. Urmil Mahalawat*

000 population is 21.1. The economic loss due to mental health conditions, between 2012-2030, is estimated at USD 1.03 trillion.

There are different kinds of mental illnesses that vary in degrees and severity. It can be split into **common mental illnesses and severe mental illnesses**. Mental health illness can range from **psychosis**- which is a chemical imbalance in the body to **neurosis**- which is poor attitudinal learning during the growing or formative years.

Common Mental Health Illnesses include:

1. Depression
2. Anxiety/Phobias
3. Eating Disorders
4. Stress

Severe Mental Health Illnesses Include:

1. Schizophrenia
2. Bipolar disorder (Manic depression)
3. Clinical depression
4. Suicidal tendency
5. Personality disorder

Statistics show that **1 in every 5 individuals suffers from some form of mental health illness symptoms**. 50% of mental health conditions begin by age 14 and 75% of mental health conditions develop by age 24. Mental illness can be triggered by multiple factors. Complex interactions between mind, body and environment result in psychological disorders. Some of the factors are long term acute stress, biological factors, drug abuse and overdose, cognitive behaviour like constant negative thoughts, low energy, etc, social problems like financial problems, breakdowns, isolation, etc.

Let's talk about these illnesses in detail for better understanding.

### **Anxiety disorders**

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness. People with these conditions have severe fear or anxiety related to certain objects or situations. Most people with an anxiety disorder try to avoid exposure to whatever triggers their anxiety.

Some examples of anxiety disorders:

#### **Generalized anxiety disorder:**

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) involves excessive worry or fear that disrupts everyday living.

---

## **Mental Health: A Social Dilemma**

*Dr. Urmil Mahalawat*

People may also experience physical symptoms, including:

- restlessness
- fatigue
- poor concentration
- tense muscles
- interrupted sleep

A bout of anxiety symptoms does not necessarily need a specific trigger in people with GAD. They may experience excessive anxiety when encountering everyday situations that do not pose a direct danger, such as chores or appointments. A person with GAD may sometimes feel anxiety with no trigger at all.

#### **Panic disorder:**

People with a panic disorder experience regular panic attacks involving sudden, overwhelming terror or a sense of imminent disaster and death.

#### **Phobias:**

There are different types of phobia:

- **Simple phobias:** These may involve a disproportionate fear of specific objects, scenarios, or animals. A fear of spiders is a typical example.
- **Social phobia:** Sometimes known as social anxiety, this is a fear of being subject to the judgment of others. People with social phobia often restrict their exposure to social environments.
- **Agoraphobia:** This term refers to a fear of situations where getting away may be difficult, such as being in an elevator or a moving train. Many people misunderstand this phobia as the fear of being outside.
- **Acrophobia:** This term refers to a fear of heights.
- **Claustrophobia:** This term refers to a fear of tight or crowded spaces.

Phobias are deeply personal, and doctors do not know every type. There could be thousands of phobias, and what may seem unusual to one person can be a severe problem that dominates daily life for another.

#### **OCD:**

People with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) have obsessions and compulsions. In other words, they experience constant, stressful thoughts and a powerful urge to perform repetitive acts, such as handwashing.

**PTSD:**

PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder) can occur after a person experiences or witnesses an intensely stressful or traumatic event. During this type of event, the person thinks that their life or other people's lives are in danger. They may feel afraid or that they have no control over what is happening.

These sensations of trauma and fear may then contribute to PTSD.

**Mood disorders:**

People may also refer to mood disorders as affective disorders or depressive disorders. People with these conditions have significant mood changes, generally involving either mania, a period of high energy and joy, or depression. Examples of mood disorders include:

- **Major depression:** An individual with major depression experiences a constant low mood and loses interest in activities and events that they previously enjoyed (anhedonia). They can feel prolonged periods of sadness or extreme sadness.
- **Bipolar disorder:** A person with bipolar disorder experiences changes in their mood, energy levels, levels of activity, and ability to continue with daily life. Periods of high mood are known as manic phases, while depressive phases bring on low mood.
- **Seasonal affective disorder (SAD):** Reduced daylight during the fall, winter, and early spring months triggers this type of major depression. It is most common in countries far from the equator.

**Schizophrenia disorders:**

Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. People with schizophrenia may seem like they have lost touch with reality, which can be distressing for them and for their family and friends. The symptoms of schizophrenia can make it difficult to participate in usual, everyday activities, but effective treatments are available. Many people who receive treatment can engage in school or work, achieve independence, and enjoy personal relationships.

**MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIA**

Mental health issues have long been a taboo in India, but rising consciousness among the younger generation and the effect of the Covid pandemic have made people more mindful about their general welfare.

Yet while the country's youth, especially in cities, are now more comfortable talking about their problems and seeking treatment, there is a huge swathe of the population, especially in rural pockets, that needs intervention.

According to a national mental health survey, nearly 150 million Indians need mental health care services and fewer than 30 million are seeking care.

It is no surprise that the state of mental health of a country, correlates positively with its economic

---

**Mental Health: A Social Dilemma**

*Dr. Urmil Mahalawat*

growth. Projections show that India will suffer massive economic losses owing to mental health conditions. As of 2015, on a global level, over 322.48 million people worldwide suffer from some form of depressive disorder and as of 2017, more than 14 percent of the total population in India suffer from variations of mental disorders. The majority of this share includes older adult females in India.

In India, every seventh person suffers from some form of mental disorder. The epidemiology of mental disorders, specifically, depression on a global scale, has been vastly studied. Today, it is regarded as the leading contributor to disease burden and morbidity worldwide, that may even result in suicide if left untreated. Risk factors, relative to developing depressive and anxiety disorders, include bullying victimisation, childhood sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, and lead exposure as an environmental risk factor which can lead to idiopathic developmental intellectual disability. Further, chronic levels of unmanaged stress and anxiety are known to take a toll on the physical and mental health of an individual. A recent study reflected that 74% of Indians suffered from stress while 88% suffered from some kind of anxiety disorder. Some of the symptoms include increased heart rates, hyperventilation, chronic fatigue and difficulties with concentration. Studies reported a significant increase in the number of cases of stress and anxiety among Indians since the pandemic.

The Government of India has launched the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in 1982, with the following objectives:

- To ensure the availability and accessibility of minimum mental healthcare for all in the foreseeable future, particularly to the most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of the population;
- To encourage the application of mental health knowledge in general healthcare and in social development; and
- To promote community participation in the mental health service development and to stimulate efforts towards self-help in the community.

The District Mental Health Program (DMHP) was launched under NMHP in the year 1996 (in IX Five Year Plan). The DMHP was based on 'Bellary Model' with the following components:

- Early detection & treatment.
- Training: imparting short term training to general physicians for diagnosis and treatment of common mental illnesses with limited number of drugs under guidance of specialist. The Health workers are being trained in identifying mentally ill persons.
- IEC: Public awareness generation.
- Monitoring: the purpose is for simple Record Keeping.

#### **EARLY SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities

---

### **Mental Health: A Social Dilemma**

*Dr. Urmil Mahalawat*

- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

#### **COMMON CAUSES OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

##### **Biophysical:**

- Family history of mental health problem
- Complications during pregnancy or birth
- Personal history of Traumatic Brain Injury
- Chronic medical condition such as cancer or diabetes, especially hypothyroidism or other brain-related illness such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Poor nutrition and lack of sleep.

##### **Psychological:**

- Stressful life situations, such as financial problems or breaking the law
- Traumatic life experiences, such as rape or serving in the armed forces
- Low self-esteem, perceived incompetence, negative view of life
- Poor academic achievement

##### **Social:**

- Being abused or neglected as a child
- Being in an abusive relationship or friendship
- Having few friends or few healthy relationships
- Recent loss, either by death, divorce, or other means

---

#### **Mental Health: A Social Dilemma**

*Dr. Urmil Mahalawat*

- Bullying, either as the victim or perpetrator
- Growing up, or currently living, in poverty
- Poor social skills, poor communication skills
- Discrimination
- Lack of access to support services

**Spiritual:**

- Perception of being irredeemable or inherently flawed beyond repair
- Perception of insignificance
- Conflicting thoughts or doubts surrounding deep religious beliefs

**HOW TO AVOID MENTAL ILLNESS****Biophysical:**

- Secure Attachment as a child
- Healthy diet, exercise, and development

**Psychological:**

- Reliable support and discipline from caregivers
- Following rules at home, school, work
- Emotional self-regulation
- Good coping skills and problem solving skills
- Subjective sense of self-sufficiency
- Optimism
- Positive self-regard
- Focus on making healthy food and beverage choices from all five food groups including fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy to get the nutrients you need.

**Social:**

- Ability to make friends and get along with others
- Good peer relationships
- Supportive relationship with family
- Participation in sports team, club, community, or religious group
- Economic/Financial Security
- Access to support services

---

**Mental Health: A Social Dilemma**

*Dr. Urmil Mahalawat*

**Spiritual:**

- Future orientation
- Achievement motivation
- Set of moral beliefs

**CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, mental health is as important as physical health. It affects a person in many different ways. It disrupts their social, spiritual, psychological and biophysical aspects. The mental health in India has also seen a drastic increase in the last couple of years. In the above written paper measures to identify and avoid have been mentioned which include following a healthy lifestyle and living in a happy and safe environment

**\*Associate Professor  
Department of Geography  
L.B.S Government College  
Kotputli (Raj.)**

**REFERENCES**

1. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>
2. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/154543#types>
3. <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health>
4. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/list-of-phobias#other-phobias>
5. <https://nhm.gov.in/index1.php?lang=1&level=2&sublinkid=1043&lid=359>
6. <https://www.statista.com/topics/6944/mental-health-in-india/#topicOverview>
7. <https://www.americanmentalwellness.org/prevention/risk-and-protective-factors/>
8. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(19\)30475-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(19)30475-4/fulltext)
9. Mental health awareness: The Indian scenario by Kalpana Srivastava, Kaushik Chatterjee, and Pookala Shivaram Bhat
10. The Mental Health Epidemic: About 56 Million Indians Suffer From Depression by Ratika Rana  
Mental Health in India: Issues and Concerns by Anant Kumar
11. India mental health country profile by Sudhir K. Khandelwal, Harsh P. Jhingan, S. Ramesh, Rajesh K. Gupta & Vinay K. Srivastava