



Do Women Suffer More Mental Health Problems than Man?

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1. Mental Health in India

Mental health is an integral part of health and is more than the absence of mental illnesses. It refers to a broad array of activities directly or indirectly related to the mental well-being, prevention of mental disorders, and treatment and rehabilitation of people affected by mental disorders. Interventions, focusing on raising awareness of mental health issues and mobilizing efforts in support of mental health, are necessary for addressing the situation.

Mental illness is associated with a significant burden of morbidity and disability. Lifetime prevalence rates for any kind of psychological disorder are higher than previously thought, are increasing in recent cohorts and affect nearly half the population. Despite being common, mental illness is under diagnosed by doctors. Less than half of those who meet diagnostic criteria for psychological disorders are identified by doctors. Patients, too, appear reluctant to seek professional help. Only 2 in every 5 people experiencing a mood, anxiety or substance use disorder seeking assistance in the year of the onset of the disorder. Overall rates of psychiatric disorder are almost identical for men and women but striking gender differences are found in the patterns of mental illness.

2. Determinants of Mental Health

Mental health, like other aspects of health, can be affected by a range of socioeconomic factors that need to be addressed through comprehensive strategies for promotion, prevention, treatment and recovery in a whole-of-government approach. Determinants of mental health and mental disorders include not only individual attributes such as the ability to manage one's thoughts, emotions, behaviors and interactions with others, but also social, cultural, economic, political and environmental factors such as national policies, social protection, living standards, working conditions, and community social supports. Poverty and low education levels are the key amongst these factors. Specific psychological and personality factors also contribute towards the vulnerability. Genetic factors also play some role.

Treatment of mental health disorders is of utmost importance. Policy makers should be encouraged to promote availability of and access to cost-effective treatment of common mental disorders at the primary health care level.

3. Mental Health in India

In India, WHO estimates that the burden of mental health problems is of the tune of 2,443 DALYs per 100,000 population and the age-adjusted suicide rate per 100,000 population is 21.1. It is estimated that, in India, the economic loss, due to mental health conditions, between 2012-2030, is 1.03 trillions of 2010 dollars. Mental health workforce in India (per 100,000 population) include psychiatrists (0.3), nurses (0.12), psychologists (0.07) and social workers (0.07).

A WHO report suggests that India is the most depressed country in the world. It's time we paid more attention.

1. One out of every five Indians is suffering from a mental disorder.
2. 50% of corporate India is under chronic stress.
3. A WHO report suggests that India is the most depressed country in the world.
4. The same report lists suicide as the third largest cause of death in 15-35 year olds.

5. At the moment, India spends 0.06% of its total health budget on mental healthcare.
6. Up to 50% of mental, behavioral and psychological problems have their onset during adolescence.
7. An average of 300 people -200 men and 100 women –commit suicide every day.
8. At least 20 percent of young people experience some form of mental illness.
9. Only about one in ten people with mental health disorders are thought to receive evidence-based treatment.
10. In December 2015, it was reported that there are 3,800 psychiatrists and 898 clinical psychologists across the nation.
11. Only 43 government institutions and less than 26,000 hospital beds are dedicated to mental health patients.

4. Some shocking stats regarding depression / mental Health :-

- One in six people aged 10-19 years is suffering from depression
- Mental health conditions account for 16 per cent of the global burden of disease and injury in people aged 10-19 years
- Half of all mental health conditions start by the age of 14 years and most cases are undetected and untreated
- Globally, depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15-19-year-olds.
- The consequences of not addressing adolescent mental health conditions extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health and limiting opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults
- Mental health promotion and prevention are key to helping adolescents thrive

5. Women's Mental Health

Gender is a critical determinant of mental health and mental illness. The morbidity associated with mental illness has received substantially more attention than the gender specific determinants and mechanisms that promote and protect mental health and foster resilience to stress and adversity. Gender determines the differential power and control men and women have over the socioeconomic determinants of their mental health and lives, their social position, status and treatment in society and their susceptibility and exposure to specific mental health risks. Gender differences occur particularly in the rates of common mental disorders - depression, anxiety and somatic complaints. These disorders, in which women predominate, affect approximately 1 in 3 people in the community and constitute a serious public health problem. Unipolar depression, predicted to be the second leading cause of global disability burden by 2020, is twice as common in women.

Depression is not only the most common women's mental health problem but may be more persistent in women than men. More research is needed. Reducing the overrepresentation of women who are depressed would contribute significantly to lessening the global burden of disability caused by psychological disorders.

The lifetime prevalence rate for alcohol dependence, another common disorder, is more than twice as high in men than women. In developed countries, approximately 1 in 5 men and 1 in 12 women develop alcohol dependence during their lives.

6. Women's Mental Health: The Facts

- Depressive disorders account for close to 41.9% of the disability from neuropsychiatric disorders among women compared to 29.3% among men
- Leading mental health problems of the elderly are depression, organic brain syndromes, and dementias. A majority are women

- An estimated 80% of 50 million people affected by violent conflicts, civil wars, disasters, and displacement are women and children
- Lifetime prevalence rate of violence against women ranges from 16% to 50%
- At least one in five women suffers rape or attempted rape in their lifetime.
- Studies of suicide and deliberate self-harm have revealed a universally common trend of more female attempters and more male completers of suicide. However, in contrast to the data from many other countries, except China, which records the highest female suicide rate, women outnumber men in completed suicides in India.
- According to an eye-opening United Nations report, around two-third of married women in India were victims of domestic violence and one incident of violence translated into women losing 7 working days in the country. Furthermore, as many as 70% of married women between the ages of 15 and 49 years are victims of beating, rape or coerced sex. The common forms of violence against Indian women include female feticide (selective abortion based on the fetus gender or sex selection of child), domestic violence, dowry death or harassment, mental and physical torture, sexual trafficking, and public humiliation. The reproductive roles of women, such as their expected role of bearing children, the consequences of infertility, and the failure to produce a male child have been linked to wife-battering and female suicide.

7. Conclusion

It is therefore, amply clear that women's mental health cannot be considered in isolation from social, political, and economic issues. A woman's health must incorporate mental and physical health across the life cycle and should reach beyond the narrow perspective of reproductive and maternal health, which is often the focus of our policies. In the discussion of the determinants of poor mental health of women, the focus needs to be shifted from individual and "lifestyle" risk factors to the recognition of the broader, social, economic, and legal factors that affect women's lives. It is essential to recognize how the socio-cultural, economic, legal, infrastructural, and environmental factors that affect women's mental health are configured in the given community setting. In summary, concerted efforts at social, political, economic, and legal levels can bring change in the lives of Indian women and contribute to the improvement of the mental health of women.

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