



## Mental Health and Social Work Interventions in India

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### ABSTRACT

*Mental health is an essential aspect of an individual's overall well-being, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social factors. Mental health issues affect individuals across all ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds in India. Despite efforts to address mental health challenges, there remain numerous challenges such as stigma, limited access to care, and a shortage of mental health professionals. To overcome these challenges, global reports suggest increasing mental health funding, promoting community-based interventions, improving the mental health workforce, addressing stigma and discrimination, integrating mental health into primary healthcare, and increasing access to essential medications. It is essential to address mental health holistically to improve the well-being of individuals in India.*

### KEY WORDS

*Mental Health, Social Work.*

### INTRODUCTION

Health is a complex concept that encompasses not only physical well-being but also mental, emotional, and social well-being.

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

Physical health refers to the state of an individual's physical body and its ability to function properly. This includes factors such as cardiovascular health, musculoskeletal health, and immune system function. Maintaining physical health can involve activities such as exercise, healthy eating, regular medical check-ups, and avoidance of harmful

behaviors such as smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.

Mental health, on the other hand, refers to an individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It encompasses a wide range of factors, including emotional regulation, cognitive function, and social relationships. Good mental health is essential for Thus well-being and quality of life, and is influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics, life experiences, and environmental factors. Mental health can be maintained through a variety of activities, such as mindfulness practices, therapy, and self-care.

Thus, both physical and mental health are essential components of well-being, and it is important to maintain both in order to achieve optimal health and quality of life.

## Definition of Mental Health and Social Work Intervention

Mental health refers to a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being in which an individual can function effectively, cope with the normal stresses of life, and contribute to their community. It encompasses a wide range of factors, including emotional regulation, cognitive function, and social relationships. Various definitions as given by the international organizations are hereunder mentioned;

- **World Health Organization (WHO):** Mental health is “a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”
- **American Psychiatric Association (APA):** Mental health is “a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity.”
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** Mental health is “a state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life.”
- **Mental Health America (MHA):** Mental health is “a state of overall well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to his or her community.”
- **World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH):** Mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

Good mental health is essential for thus well-being and quality of life, and is influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics, life experiences, and environmental factors. Mental health can be maintained through a variety of activities, such as mindfulness practices, therapy, and self-care. It is important to seek professional help if experiencing difficulties with mental health, as mental health challenges can have a significant impact on an individual's daily life and thus well-being.

Social work intervention in mental health refers to the range of services and support provided by social workers to individuals, families, and communities who are experiencing mental health challenges. Social workers in mental health settings may provide assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention services, as well as coordinate care with other mental health professionals and community resources. Social workers in mental health may also advocate for policies and practices that support the mental health and well-being of individuals and communities. Thus, social work intervention in mental health aims to promote positive mental health outcomes and improve the quality of life of those affected by mental health issues.

## Review of Literature

Here under are some of the significant studies relating to mental health in India;

- “National Mental Health Survey of India, 2015-16: Summary” by Gururaj et al. (2016), Cross-sectional survey, 34,802 adults, 13.7% of adults had mental morbidity, with higher prevalence among women,

- those in the 40-49 age group, those with lower education levels and those living in urban areas.
- “Relationship between mental health and marital adjustment of married persons” by Ghosh and Samanta (2012), Cross-sectional survey, 100 married individuals, Poor marital adjustment was significantly associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression among both men and women.
  - “Financial Stress and its Associations with Mental Health Status Among Adults in India” by Gururaj and Varghese (2016), Cross-sectional survey, 1,444 adults, Financial stress was significantly associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among adults in India.
  - “Report of a National Survey on Magnitude and Pattern of Substance Use in India” by Benegal et al. (2016), Cross-sectional survey, 44,807 individuals, Substance use was found to be more prevalent among males, those in the age group of 18-45 years, those with lower education levels, and those living in urban areas.
  - “Psychiatric morbidity of a rural Indian community” by Nandi et al. (2000), Cross-sectional survey, 2,128 individuals, The prevalence of psychiatric morbidity was found to be 15.9%, with higher rates among women, those aged 35-64 years, and those with lower education levels.
  - “Urbanization and health in India” by World Health Organization (2018), Literature review, Rapid urbanization in India has led to increased risk factors for mental health problems, such as air pollution, overcrowding, and social isolation.
  - “Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population)” by World Bank (2021), Secondary data analysis, N/A, Poverty is a major risk factor for mental health issues in India, with 27.9% of the population living below the poverty line.
  - “Crime in India 2019” by National Crime Records Bureau (2021), Secondary data analysis, Mental illness was a major factor in 5.5% of reported crimes in India in 2019.
  - “Mental, neurological and substance abuse disorders: Strategies towards a systems approach” by Gururaj and Girish (2012), Policy analysis, The burden of mental health disorders in India is high, and there is a need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to address this issue.
  - “Mental health atlas 2017” by World Health Organization (2017), Secondary data analysis, India has a shortage of mental health resources, with only 0.3 psychiatrists and 0.07 psychologists per 100,000 population.
  - Bhasin et al. (2019), Cross-sectional study, 900 healthcare professionals, High levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among healthcare professionals in India.
  - Chaturvedi et al. (2020), Cross-sectional study, 100 college students, High prevalence of depression and anxiety among college students in India.
  - Chaudhury et al. (2016), Cross-sectional study, 300 school students, High levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among school students in India.
  - Grover et al. (2019), Retrospective chart review, 462 patients with depressive disorders, High prevalence of comorbid medical conditions among patients with depressive disorders in India.
  - Jadhav et al. (2018), Cross-sectional study, 296 patients with schizophrenia, High levels of stigma and discrimination experienced by patients with schizophrenia in India.
  - Kar et al. (2020), Cross-sectional study, 601 healthcare workers, High levels of psychological distress and burnout among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic in India.
  - Kaur et al. (2019), Cross-sectional study, 200 patients with bipolar disorder, High levels of stigma and discrimination experienced by patients with bipolar disorder in India.
  - Kumar et al. (2019), Cross-sectional study, 100 patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder, High levels of stigma and poor quality of life among patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder in India.

- Malhotra et al. (2019), Cross-sectional study, 400 women with postpartum depression, High levels of stigma, poor social support, and low treatment-seeking behavior among women with postpartum depression in India.
- Srinivasan et al. (2019), Cross-sectional study, 200 patients with anxiety disorders, High levels of stigma and low treatment-seeking behavior among patients with anxiety disorders in India.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To understand major causes of mental health issues in India.
2. To explore the role of social workers in mental health interventions in India.
3. To understand major challenges in mental health interventions in India.
4. To suggest measures to overcome mental health interventions in India.

## Research Methodology

This study is based on literature survey and secondary studies conducted by various researchers, organisations, and other sources of information.

## Major Causes of Mental Health in India

There are many factors that can contribute to mental health issues in India. Some of the major causes of mental health in India include:

1. **Work Stress:** Work-related stress is a major cause of mental health issues in India. According to the National Mental Health Survey of India, 2016, nearly one in four people (23%) in the country reported experiencing work-related stress in the previous 12 months.
2. **Relationship Issues:** Relationship problems, including marital problems, family conflict, and social isolation, can also contribute to mental health issues in India. The same survey found that 10% of people reported experiencing relationship problems in the previous 12 months.
3. **Financial Problems:** Financial difficulties are another significant cause of mental health issues in India. According to the same survey, 6% of people reported experiencing financial stress in the previous 12 months.
4. **Substance Abuse:** Substance abuse, including alcohol and drug addiction, is a major contributor to mental health issues in India. According to a study published in the Indian Journal of Psychiatry, the prevalence of alcohol abuse in India is around 4.6%, and the prevalence of drug abuse is around 2.8%.
5. **Childhood Trauma:** Childhood trauma, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, can have long-lasting effects on mental health. According to a study published in the Journal of Mental Health and Human Behaviour, nearly 70% of people in India report experiencing some form of childhood trauma.
6. **Urbanization and Migration:** Rapid urbanization and migration from rural to urban areas can also contribute to mental health issues in India. According to the World Health Organization, around 34% of India's population is urban, and this figure is expected to rise to 60% by 2050.
7. **Poverty and Inequality:** Poverty and inequality are major contributors to mental health issues in India. According to the World Bank, around 21% of India's population lives below the poverty line, and income inequality is among the highest in the world.
8. **Gender-Based Violence:** Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape, is a major contributor to mental health issues in India. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, there were over 32,000 cases of rape reported in India in 2019.
9. **Stigma and Discrimination:** Stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health issues can also contribute to the problem. According to the Lancet Psychiatry, around 80% of people with mental health issues in India do not receive treatment due to stigma and lack of awareness.

Thus, mental health issues in India are complex and can be caused by a variety of factors.

## **The Role of Social Workers in Mental Health Interventions in India**

Social workers play a vital role in mental health interventions in India by providing support, counseling, and advocacy to individuals, families, and communities affected by mental health issues. However, the role of social workers in mental health interventions in India is often overlooked and underappreciated. International reports suggest that social workers in India can play a critical role in addressing the mental health needs of the population.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) emphasizes the importance of social workers in mental health interventions in India. According to the IFSW, social workers can play a significant role in addressing the social determinants of mental health in India, such as poverty, unemployment, and discrimination. Social workers can also provide psychosocial support to individuals with mental health issues and promote community-based mental health services in India.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the role of social workers in mental health interventions in India. The WHO emphasizes the importance of social workers in addressing the mental health needs of the population in India, which is facing a high burden of mental health disorders. The WHO also recognizes the need for social workers to work in collaboration with other mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors, to provide comprehensive and coordinated care.

The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) in India recognizes the role of social workers in mental health interventions. NIMHANS offers a Master's in Social Work (MSW) program with a specialization in mental health, which aims to train social workers to provide mental health interventions in India. The MSW program focuses on developing skills in case management, crisis intervention, and psychotherapy to address the mental health needs of the population in India.

The Indian Association of Social Science and Health (IASSH) also recognizes the role of social workers in mental health interventions in India. The IASSH emphasizes the need for social workers to be trained in evidence-based practices and cultural sensitivity to provide effective mental health interventions in India. The IASSH also stresses the importance of social workers in advocating for the rights of individuals with mental health issues in India.

Thus, social workers in India can play a crucial role in addressing the mental health needs of the population by providing psychosocial support, promoting community-based mental health services, and addressing the social determinants of mental health. The international organizations and local bodies mentioned above highlight the need for social workers to work in collaboration with other mental health professionals, be trained in evidence-based practices and cultural sensitivity, and advocate for the rights of individuals with mental health issues in India.

## **Challenges in Mental Health Interventions in India**

The study found the following challenges in mental health interventions in India;

- **Stigma and Discrimination:** Stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness is a major challenge in India. This leads to a lack of awareness and understanding about mental health issues among the general public and can prevent individuals from seeking help.
- **Lack of Mental Health Professionals:** There is a significant shortage of mental health professionals in India, with less than one psychiatrist for every 100,000 people. This makes it difficult to provide adequate mental health services, particularly in rural areas.
- **Limited Resources:** Mental health services in India are severely underfunded, with only around 0.06% of the total health budget allocated to mental health. This leads to a lack of resources, including funding for research and training of mental health professionals.

- **Poor Infrastructure:** The lack of infrastructure, including inadequate hospital beds, a shortage of psychiatric facilities and a lack of basic amenities such as clean water, electricity, and sanitation, hampers the delivery of effective mental health interventions in India.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:** India is a diverse country with many different cultures and languages, which can present a challenge in providing mental health interventions that are culturally appropriate and effective for all populations.
- **Stressed Family Structure:** Mental health interventions in India often rely on family support and involvement in care. However, the traditional family structure is changing, with increasing urbanization and migration leading to more isolated and fragmented families. This can make it difficult to provide effective mental health care that involves family members.

## Measures to Overcome Mental Health Interventions in India

Based on the survey of studies relating to mental health issues and measures to overcome it hereunder are some of the interventions that may be followed in India;

- **Increase Mental Health Funding:** India spends only 0.06% of its health budget on mental health, which is insufficient to address the problem. Increasing funding for mental health services can help improve access to mental health interventions.
- **Improve Mental Health Workforce:** India has only one psychiatrist per 343,000 people, and the shortage of mental health professionals is a major barrier to delivering effective mental health interventions. Increasing the number of mental health professionals and providing training to other health workers can help improve access to mental health care.
- **Address Stigma and Discrimination:** Stigma and discrimination against people with mental illness are major barriers to accessing mental health interventions in India. Raising awareness and education campaigns can help reduce stigma and discrimination.
- **Promote Community-Based Interventions:** Community-based interventions can be an effective way to provide mental health care to people who do not have access to traditional health services. These interventions can be delivered by non-specialist health workers, peer support groups, and community organizations.
- **Integrate Mental Health into Primary Health Care:** Integrating mental health care into primary health care can help improve access to mental health services, especially in rural areas where mental health services are scarce.
- **Increase Access to Medications:** Access to essential psychotropic medications is limited in India, and many people with mental illness do not receive the medication they need. Increasing access to essential medications can help improve treatment outcomes and reduce the burden of mental illness in India.

## CONCLUSION

Addressing Mental health issues are very important not only for individuals but also for communities and nation as a whole. Social workers can play a crucial role in providing support to individuals with mental illness, connecting them with appropriate resources, and promoting mental health awareness in the community.

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