

General Assembly 3 – Social, Humanitarian and Cultural

Examining and tackling the main
causes of widespread mental
health issues



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Introduction

Our world and society, in the western world especially, has become an easier environment to live in compared to the olden days, so why the increase in mental health? The internet and social media are a main cause for mental health illnesses such as depression and anxiety. The violence depicted in video games, sexual orientation confusion, the unrealistic standards, social media portrays, and most important of all, the hindrance of face to face interaction caused by the internet which mostly leads to social anxiety. Proven by a study by Elina Mir and Caroline Novas, National Center for Health Research.

Mental health is among the leading causes of ill health and disability worldwide, there is no certain 'age group' especially affected by mental illness, it can affect anyone at any given age. This issue is becoming increasingly relevant due to continuously elevating number of people affected by mental illness.

Once one is aware of the mental illness that they suffer from two thirds refuse to seek help due to reasons such as: discrimination, shame, stigma, and the neglect. This is because the lack of awareness to this issue and funding by various governments. 33% of countries contribute less than or equal to 1% of their budget towards development in mental illnesses and 25% of countries do not even have the most important drugs to treat epilepsy, schizophrenia or depression. In over half of the countries in this world, there is only one psychiatrist per 100 000 people.



Definition of Key Terms

Mental Illness

It is a health condition involving changes in emotion, thinking and or behaviour.

Depression

It is a common mental disorder, affecting approximately 300 million people worldwide right now, characterized by sadness, feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, disturbed sleep and or appetite, feelings of tiredness and lack of concentration. These factors affect one's ability at work school or in society. Depression can lead to suicide.

Anxiety

Anxiety disorders form a category of mental health diagnoses that lead to excessive nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worry.

Schizophrenia

A severe mental disorder, characterized by profound disruptions in thinking, affecting language, perception, and the sense of self. It often includes psychotic experiences, such as hearing voices or delusions. It can impair functioning through the loss of an acquired capability to earn a livelihood, or the disruption of studies.

Psychosis

Characterized by distortions of thinking and perception, as well as inappropriate or narrowed range of emotions. Incoherent or irrelevant speech may be present. Hallucinations (hearing voices or seeing things that are not there), delusions (fixed, false idiosyncratic beliefs) or excessive and unwarranted suspicions may also occur.

Dementia

Dementia is a syndrome due to disease of the brain – usually of a chronic or progressive nature – in which there is disturbance of multiple higher cortical functions, including memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension, calculation, learning capacity, language, and judgement. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia.(1)



General Overview

People who are mentally ill can have considerable difficulty with their thinking, their mood, or their behaviour. Mental illness is not the same as experiencing normal stress and sadness. One main difference is that mental illness causes significant distress and impairs functioning, making it difficult to cope with the demands of everyday life. The overwhelming distress a mentally ill person endures is not simply a reaction to daily happenings, the behaviour of a mentally sick person does not occur on purpose it is out of their control.

When a physical illness is not treated it worsens, the same goes for mental illness. When treatment is not provided or sought by a mentally sick individual the feelings worsen leading to for example suicide. Another point it could lead to is the disintegration in society, seeing as the individual would have increasing difficulties working, communicating and fulfilling general necessities in an everyday life.

The Impact of Mental Illness on Maternal Health

Worldwide 10% of pregnant women suffer from depression and 13% of mothers do, in developing countries the numbers are higher. Poverty, exposure to violence, abuse, natural disasters and many more, which are more likely to happen in developing countries, increases the risk of mental illness during maternity or after birth. The reason why all these factors are more likely in developing countries is that there are sometimes wars and corrupt governments. In many Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDC's) women have a set place in society which many times limits them to opportunity. The depression can even lead mothers to commit suicide. These mental illness among mothers can also affect the development of their infant because they are very sensitive to their environment and care. The mental illness amongst mothers can affect their physical health as well, due to their lack of care for themselves (eating, bathing, etc.).

Impact of Mental Illness on Physical Health

The longevity of a mentally ill persons life, mainly schizophrenic or depressed people, can be shorter compared to healthy individuals lives, due to studies undergone. If an individual suffers from a serious mental illness, life expectancy can reduce from 10-20 years. According to studies by University College London, Edinburgh University and the University of Sydney depression and anxiety have been linked to an increase of chances to be diagnosed with cancer and a heart disease. Various researchers suspect the higher chances



to these exemplified diseases by a mental health, such as depression, occurs due to the fact that mentally ill people are less likely to seek medical help or attention for their physical health when they are in need.

Poverty and Mental Illness

Poverty increases the risk of a mental illness as a mental illness increases your likelihood to end up in poverty. Worldwide the majority of individuals suffering from a mental illness live in poverty. Especially in LEDC's mental illnesses are stigmatized, discriminated against and not treated with the amount of attention such illnesses prolong or not at all. Individuals in poverty are more prone to common mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety due to hunger, lack of residence and debts some might face. Most mentally ill individuals worldwide are in poverty due to the financial inability to receive care and therefore disabling these individuals to get a job. People who suffer from schizophrenia have a higher risk of being unemployed compared to a healthy person. Individuals with a low Socioeconomic Status (SES) are more likely to suffer schizophrenia.

Major Parties Involved

United States of America

Almost 1 in 2 Americans has the chance of having a mental disease over the course of their entire life. And 1 in 5 adults experience mental illness in the United States of America(6). Despite the legislation such as the 2008 mental health parity and the affordable care act created in 2010 to fund the insurance gaps, more and more Americans lack resources to receive appropriate care. Approximately 9.6% of Americans with a serious mental illness lack health insurance and therefore cannot receive care. For individuals without psychological distress but physical distress, health care access and affordability has been improved. Although the aid to the physical in need is very beneficial the mentally ill are not getting the same amount of medical attention access. Mental health illnesses are on the rise in the USA whereas those who are equipped to treat it and provide care are not enough.

United Kingdom

In 2014 a survey reported that in the UK 17% of the adult population suffered from mental illness and only 37% of those were under the course of mental treatment. NHS



England (a health care service that is also provided in: Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) is improving and evolving offering people affected by mental illness more personalized and better care. The IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) program began in 2008 and has been beneficial to treating adults with anxiety or depression. Right now over 900,000 citizens use their services and the number is estimated to increase in the coming years. Individuals who suffer from a common mental health illness have a higher cost at treatments, due to the long-term physical health problems that arise in two thirds of individuals affected by a common mental illness.

Iran

26.5 percent of Iranian women and 20.8 percent of Iranian men have mental-health difficulties. Research by Tehran University proves that women in Iran are more likely to be mentally ill than women in MEDC's due to their subjection to the household and their restrictions. Many mentally ill individuals fail to seek help due to the stigmatization and negligence in the system that is mainly work and performance oriented.

Australia

According to a national survey in 2007, one in five people aged 16-85 suffer from a common mental illness, such as anxiety, eating disorders or depression.

WHO (World Health Organization)

An organization that is actively advocating for mental health awareness and treatment, with events such as: world mental health day and programs/ such as, the mental health action plan.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
1955	Mental health study act
Mid to late 1900's	Psychoactive drugs were introduced as a cure for the mentally ill
1948	The World Health Organisation published the Sixth Revision of the International Classification of Diseases. For the first time this included sections on mental disorders



1949	Lithium, as psychotropic drug, was introduced by Australian psychiatrist J.F.J Cade
1949	Foundation of the Mental Health Trust and the Mental Health Research Fund
1950	Smith, Kline and French introduced Drinamyl (Dexamyl in the USA), combining dextroamphetamine and amobarbital (previously called amylobarbitone) as an antidepressant, anti-anxiety and diet drug.
1951	Second World Federation for Mental Health congress held in Mexico
1951	John Bowlby's Maternal Care and Mental Health published in Geneva by the World Health Organisation

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Mental Health and human rights, 28 December 2017 (A/HRC/RES/36/13)
- Statement submitted by World Federation for Mental Health (E/CN.6/2014/NGO/162)
- Mental Health and human rights: Report of the United Nations high commissioner for human rights (A/HRC/34/32)
- Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development: Information presented by the Canadian human rights commission (A/HRC/30/NI/2)
- Right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health: Report on the special rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (A/HRC/41/34)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The mental health action plan introduced by the World Health Organization (WHO), is currently still in place as it aims to gain international attention on this matter. It calls for a destruction of stigmas and discrimination on mental illness and for an expansion in health



services. It also aims to strengthen research into mental health. This plan was introduced in 2013 and its goals are expected to be adopted and integrated by 2020.

Possible Solutions

In order to tackle such issues it has to be recognized as one that needs immediate attention. On social media, with posters and more organizations and or individuals should be encouraged to speak out on the issue at hand. The main causes for mental illness lie under stress and pressure, something that cannot be directly tackled due to the competitive society created by mankind. Informing citizens or overlaying the message that having a mental illness is okay so long as you seek help, can ensure a sense of security upon individuals to speak up seek health and get better. Such a proposition is beneficial to many especially if a country wants to keep a strong working class, something that mental illness can hinder.

Countries that contribute low amounts of their GDP, being 1-3% to mental health care should be encouraged to raise such percentage up to at least 5%. The 31% of countries with no specified budget towards mental health are called upon to create one. In order to have a strong working class you will need motivated and stable people to work in them. If an individual is hindered on their way towards that due to the lack of funding, this can lead to discouragement. Additionally, free mental health care would be very beneficial especially in LEDC's where it is not affordable to the average citizen and in MEDC's to relieve additional monetary stress.

Encouraging exercise, an adequate sleep schedule and a nutritional lifestyle is also crucial. The mind and body are connected, so if your body is physically at its best your mind will have relieved pressure. Schools and workplaces should enforce such programs for their employees and students into their work programming and for school as a class 1-2 times a month.

Communal homes with sufficient space for every individual for those who reside in poverty can decrease the mental health rates as a whole because the stress and pressure will be relieved off of these individuals enabling them to better their mental healths and integrate back into society's working class.



A participation of all nations in the mental health action plan by the WHO. In which they would adopt the reforms that the action plan suggests.

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Appendixes

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