Let's Talk Mental Health

Mental Health in the Context of Gender-Based Violence
By Geetika, CMGI Research Assistant

One in three women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime as per WHO statistics. The United Nations General Assembly's Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women (VAW) as "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."

Despite this definition, psychological harm is seldom taken into account in discussions about the acts of gender-based violence or the redressal mechanisms for them. Symbolic and psychological acts of violence are often dismissed, and existing redressal systems do not adequately address this issue either.

People who experience sexual harassment often endure a range of mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can increase their susceptibility to various physical health issues affecting their overall well-being. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize gender-based violence as a public mental health issue.

In their article "Violence against Women and Mental Health", Anant Kumar, S. Haque Nizami, and Naveen Kumar Srivastava (2013) discuss the role of both curative and preventive interventions to combat violence against women (VAW). Curative interventions such as counseling, medical and legal assistance, shelter, and rehabilitation programs help survivors reintegrate into society. On the other hand, preventive interventions aim to foster a violence-free environment through an interdisciplinary approach with substantial resources to curb the rising incidence of sexual assault (Kumar et al., 2013)

A holistic approach to gender-based violence emphasizes mental health training, the establishment of crises centers, and availability of counseling services that are sensitive to diverse lived experiences shapes by social determinants such as caste, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, and race.

Ultimately, failing to prioritize mental health in responses to gender-based violence limits the scope of care and support available to survivors, and ignores the broader personal and social impacts of violence. A concerted effort to integrate mental health considerations into the discourse on gender-based violence is essential for ensuring comprehensive support for survivors and fostering a safer, more equitable society.

Mental Health at Work

World Mental Health Day, marked annually on October 10 since 1992, was focused on 'mental health at work' for the year 2024. As per the WHO statistics, 60% of the global population is either formally or informally employed, and an estimated 12 billion working days are lost annually to depression and anxiety, costing US$ 1 trillion in lost productivity (World Health Organization, 2023). Poor working environments, manifested in discrimination, excessive workloads, and low job control, contribute significantly to psychological distress.

By contrast, decent work promotes mental wellbeing through purpose, achievement, positive relationships, and structured routines and is noted to contribute to the recovery and social functioning of individuals with mental health conditions. Improving workplace environments thereby becomes integral to holistic well-being.

1. World Health Organization, *Mental Health at Work*, 2023, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work.

2. Anant Kumar, S. Haque Nizami, and Naveen Kumar Srivastava, "Violence against Women and Mental Health," *Department of Rural Management, Xavier Institute of Social Service* and *Central Institute of Psychiatry*, June 4, 2013, accessed October 17, 2024, https://www.domesticviolenceintervention.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Anant-Published-Paper-58-Violence-against-Women-and-Mental-Health-MHP.pdf.

Mind Matters: Prioritizing Mental Health Amid Chaos

By Apoorva Shukla, PGPX-19

Hey folks, how are you really doing?

Submission deadlines, surprise quizzes, and endless classes—it's all pushing you, isn't it?

In this race for the best job, internship, and company, mental health often takes a backseat. But let's change that narrative.

Mental health shapes how you think, feel, and act, influencing your psychological, emotional, and social interactions. Maintaining good mental health is more crucial than ever in today's fast-paced world.

Unfortunately, mental health often lacks recognition in Indian society, and social media has exacerbated this issue. The digital world has replaced genuine socialization among peers, strangers, and even family members.

Simple, Time-Tested Ways to Improve Your Mental Health

1. Embrace Boredom

In our hyper-connected world, we're constantly bombarded with content. Reels and short videos are just a click away, never allowing us to feel bored. But this constant stimulation affects our mental processing capabilities.

Action step: Set aside 30 minutes a day to be "bored." No phone, no music, no videos. Just sit alone or with friends, allowing your mind to wander. This practice can rejuvenate you, generate new ideas, and provide fresh perspectives on stressful situations.

2. Prioritize Sleep

Our bodies have an internal clock that needs regular reset. Consistently missing sleep or having irregular sleep patterns can wreak havoc on our system, impacting both physical and mental health.

Action step: Aim to sleep at a consistent time, even if it's just a few nights a week. Quality sleep helps manage stress and prevents illness.

3. Ask for Help

Feeling overwhelmed? Don't hesitate to reach out. Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness— it's a step towards becoming stronger.

Action step: Talk to friends, family, or professors. If needed, seek professional help. Remember, no one has all the answers, and we all need support sometimes.

A Call to Action

1. Take your mental health seriously.

2. Look out for your friends—if someone seems to be struggling, talk to them.

3. Encourage seeking professional help when needed.

Remember, in the grand scheme of life, your mental well-being is just as important as—if not more than—that perfect internship or job offer. Take care, stay healthy, and let's create a more mentally aware and supportive college community together.

Role of Structural Inequities in India's Mental Health Crisis

By Geetika, CMGI Research Assistant

India's ongoing mental health crisis is both well-documented and deeply concerning. The Lancet Psychiatry study "The burden of mental disorders across the states of India: GBD 1990–2017" highlights that 197.3 million Indians, or roughly one in seven, are affected by mental disorders. According to the study, the proportional contribution of mental disorders to the total disease burden in India almost doubled from 1990 to 2017, increasing from 2.5% to 4.7%. Despite these alarming statistics, traditional approaches to mental health often fail to account for structural determinants, that is, the historical, systemic, and political forces driving inequity in this domain.

Recognizing the severity of this issue, the Economic Survey for FY 2024-25, for the first time, acknowledged the state of mental health in the country. It rightfully recognized mental health as not just a health issue but an economic one – impacting productivity, economic mobility, and health costs. This recognition is crucial, as the financial implications of mental health challenges are significant and far-reaching. Mental health treatment is a heavy financial burden for many families in India, pushing around 20% into poverty. On average, households spend 18.1% of their monthly income on mental health care, with poorer families dedicating nearly 25%. The burden is particularly acute in rural areas, where 25% of households face this strain compared to 17% in urban areas (Down To Earth, 2023). According to the World Health Organization, the prevalence of mental health problems in India is estimated to produce economic losses of approximately USD 1.03 trillion between 2012 and 2030 (World Health Organization, 2023).

While the personal aspects are significant, it's important to recognize that mental health issues are deeply intertwined with broader societal factors. Politics, history, and economics are crucial in conversations about individual mental health. Minorities and stigmatized groups are disproportionately affected by stressors, and the prevalence of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety is higher among them compared to the general population. This disparity is not coincidental; an individual's social identities, such as their gender, religion, caste, and sexuality, operate simultaneously to either enhance or constrain their life experiences at individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels.

Given this complex interplay of factors, the current approach to mental health often falls short. The overtly medicalized approach to mental well-being—often framed as diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention—fails to account for the additional stressors arising from marginalization, neurodiversity, and people's lived realities. A more comprehensive approach is needed. A psychosocial approach recognizes that aspects of a person's psychology (thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc.) as well as social norms, values, and relationships influence mental well-being. Furthermore, an intersectional lens to mental health acknowledges multiple identity markers (such as one's gender, caste, and disability) and examines how their unique combination in individuals impacts overall mental well-being.

Addressing India's mental health crisis requires a multifaceted approach that considers not only individual medical needs but also the broader socio-economic and cultural context. Without these nuances, frameworks for mental health and well-being risk being inadequate.

3. "Global Health: Mental Health Matters," *The Lancet Psychiatry*, November 2019, https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(19)30475-4/fulltext.

4. Down to Earth, "Expenditure on Treatment of Mental Illness Pushes 20% Indian Households into Poverty, Finds New Study," accessed October 17, 2024, https://www.downtoearth.org.in/health/expenditure-on-treatment-of-mental-illness-pushes-20-indian-households-into-poverty-finds-new-study-88606.

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLING SERVICES NOW AVAILABLE AT IIMA

Mental Health Support Services
Operating Hours:
Monday to Saturday: 9:30 AM - 5:30 PM
On-Site Counsellors
Monday-Wednesday:
Nupur Gupta: +91 95402 08907
Thursday-Saturday:
Ajab Primuswala: +91 99257 21125

Contact Us:
✉ Email: iimaonsite@ltolhelp.net
☎ Toll-Free Numbers: 1800 2588 121 & 1800 2588 999

The monthly newsletter from the Committee for Managing Gender Issues (CMGI) is an attempt to initiate conversations on discrimination, gender bias, sexual harassment, and related issues. We would love to have the community participate. Please reach out to Geetika Sharma at geetikas@iima.ac.in for queries, submissions, and/or feedback.

If you feel you have been subjected to sexual harassment or if you would like to make any suggestions regarding curbing sexual harassment or gender bias on campus, please reach out to us at: Email: chr-cmgi@iima.ac.in Phone: 97129 15533 Please note that any communication with the CMGI is strictly confidential.