

Seeking Mental Health Support: Overcoming Stigma and Promoting Well-being

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ABSTRACT

In Pakistan, seeking psychiatric help is often viewed negatively due to its connection with serious mental health issues and other factors. Females have a higher prevalence of psychiatric disorders than males. Understanding trends of psychiatric consultations is an important step in addressing related issues. Mental health disorders are estimated to affect about 10% of the population of Pakistan, that is about 20 million individuals and impose a heavy economic burden. Mental health is a major public health challenge in Pakistan and requires immediate attention. Awareness about psychiatric consultations and the associated stigmas should be increased. The barriers created by the society and other factors that prevent individuals from seeking timely mental health services should be addressed. The establishment of a non-judgmental environment for individuals with mental health problems can be achieved by involving healthcare professionals at all levels in targeted education and awareness campaigns.

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INTRODUCTION

Psychologists deal with only mental health while psychiatrists are trained in both medical and mental health. People who are undergoing significant changes or difficulties in their emotions or behavior that are affecting their ability to perform daily tasks should seek psychiatric care. Psychiatric consults play an important role in accurate diagnosis, comprehension of symptoms, formulation of comprehensive care plans, management of difficult situations, and improvement of overall social welfare. Although around half of the general hospital patients may have a mental health condition that affects their treatment, most psychiatric problems remain undetected at the time of admission.

Proactive mental health screening can result in improved outcomes by enabling early detection and specialist intervention[1]. Psychiatric consults have long been stigmatized worldwide, especially in developing countries. In Pakistan, which has one of the highest rates of mental health problems, seeing a psychiatrist is a taboo. The Urdu term for psychiatry is "Zehani Amraz," which is frequently associated with severe mental conditions.

Models of Psychiatric Consultation

There are two types of psychiatric consultation models: 1. Psychiatric Therapeutic Model: Prioritizes giving each patient the best care possible[2]. 2. Community Mental Health Model: To

assist those who provide mental health treatment.

Psychiatric Consultation Patterns

Before examining the causes of psychiatry's stigmatization, it is essential to comprehend the consultation patterns in this field. Key presentations at psychiatric clinics include altered sensorium, bipolar behavior, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, adjustment disorders, and cognitive impairments. These are common reasons for consultation.

Clinical Settings

Psychiatric consultations may be conducted in emergency rooms, outpatient clinics, and rehabilitation centers, among other hospital settings.

The demographics

About 20 million people in Pakistan suffer from mental illnesses, which account for 10% of the country's total population and contribute significantly to its economic burden[3, 4]. Compared to younger people, psychiatric illnesses are more common among older persons, and women are more susceptible to them. Individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are also at increased risk.

RESULTS

A psychiatrist's treatment approach involves prescribing medications, conducting psychotherapy, educating patients about their condition, and collaborating with a medical team.

Factors influencing psychiatric consultations

Limited-service availability is the primary reason for delayed psychiatric care. Other factors include healthcare staff attitudes and patient-related issues such as insufficient knowledge and awareness.

Stigma surrounding mental health consultations

In many cultures, including Pakistan, there is some hesitance to seek psychiatric help. The general community often has negative perceptions of mental health services owing to some cultural misconceptions attached to these services.

Personal discomfort

Many people feel uncomfortable and embarrassed in social situations because they are afraid of being judged by others. These feelings contribute to the overall negative perception of mental health treatment, which is often associated with feelings of alienation and excessive concern about what others think.

Cultural Believes

Pakistani society norms discourage emotional openness and have generated misconceptions about mental health support, especially among the younger generation and young men.

Psychiatric Drug Dependence

There is a perception that psychiatric drugs are sedatives given to severely ill patients and patients have to suffer through the side effects which can lead to dependence. Social scrutiny is also a concern. Some see these services as simply sedatives with minimal societal consequence, while others are concerned about the various adverse effects and addictive potential[5].

Social Rejection

People are most afraid of being rejected by society.

Media Influence

The media plays a crucial part in the perception of mental health. Although it can convey beneficial information, it often worsens the problem. Within Pakistan's entertainment sector, mental health is generally depicted negatively and linked to psychiatric hospitals. Additionally, the media tends to focus on the bizarre aspects of psychiatry and medication.

Research Experiments

Many mental health studies reveal a disturbing global pattern, especially in Pakistan, where the situation is worsening. Yet, these researches tend to emphasize the negative aspects of psychiatric treatment, which can make it appear undesirable and unsuccessful. Electroconvulsive therapy and lobotomy are two old medical procedures that have added to the fear associated with psychiatric treatments.

Religious Beliefs

Religious beliefs play an important role in stigma. Many religions encourage their followers to seek help from spiritual activities rather than professional help. In Pakistan, religious beliefs vary greatly, some embrace new concepts and others stick to traditional beliefs. This prejudice often has roots in religious beliefs and can lead to negative attitudes towards psychiatric care.

Influence of Super natural forces

Another barrier is the belief in supernatural forces. This can inhibit people in the Indian subcontinent from seeking psychiatric treatment.

Sexual Stigma

There is an overall reluctance in Pakistan to talk about sexual things. Despite the fact that sexual abuse, assault and other

associated concerns are everywhere, they are taboo subjects. The associated shame often leads individuals to avoid getting critical mental health care[6, 7].

Psychiatrist knows everything!

Many people think that psychiatrists can read your mind with magic by seeing small things like how your brow is moving . This is a false perception that discourages people from seeking mental care [8-10].

Tackling with the Problem

Improving Education and Awareness

We need to raise public awareness of mental health issues. We need to start working on debunking misconceptions about this issue and carefully examine each assumption. It is important to highlight the importance of psychiatric consultations. Media plays a big role. We can share useful techniques to reduce stigma through social media, television and other platforms. The evolving media landscape has created more opportunities to disseminate vital information[11]. Assessment of workplaces and educational institutions is also required. By integrating mental health themes into the school curriculum and developing workplace policies to address mental health issues, we can effectively overcome these challenges. Mental health professionals' benefit from being included in both corporate and educational settings. Instead

than being something to conceal or feel guilty about, mental health should be seen as a natural aspect of life. We need to provide a space where people may freely express their ideas and emotions.

Community education can contribute in the fight against stigma. Share your knowledge on mental health. Having a support network in place can help improve mental health overall. The influence of celebrities can be very helpful. There are so many people who look at these people as aspirational and their involvement can help to reduce the stigma around mental illness. Another effective tactic is sharing your personal experiences. Listening to others' stories can help people better understand stigma and its effects. Word choice is really important. When discussing mental health, it is vital to use appropriate words in the local dialect. "Zehani Khushhali," "Zehani Sukoon," "Zehani Aram," and "Zehani Sehat" are a few Urdu terms that may be beneficial. Misconceptions must be cleared up[12, 13].

CONCLUSION

Mental health is a critical issue in Pakistan that must be addressed urgently. It is vital to educate the public about the need of psychiatric consultations and to reduce societal stigmas. We also need to try to lower the obstacles to receiving mental health care. People with mental problems

deserve a life free of stigma. Healthcare professionals must be at the forefront of mental health education and awareness-raising in order to do this.

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