

## Mental Health; Need of the Hour during Pandemic



Forbes

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Every year 10<sup>th</sup> October is marked as World Mental Health Day by World Health Organization (WHO). The main objective is to spread awareness among the masses regarding the importance of mental health problems and exertions for supporting the cause. Mental health can be defined as the psychological, emotional, along with the social well-being of an individual. According to WHO, mental state is condition of well-being in which the person recognizes his own capabilities, can handle with the normal strains of life, can work effectively and fruitfully and is able to make an impact to the community. It is noteworthy because it controls our management of stress, interaction with people, and makes decisions about everything. Mental health is as important as physical health but it is overlooked as the symptoms are invisible. Anxiety, genetics, nourishment, perinatal infections and exposure to environmental threats are also contributing factors to mental illness. According to WHO, depression and suicide are the leading causes of death among 15-29-year-olds. People with severe mental health

conditions die too early as seen during last two decades, due to avoidable physical conditions.

Suicide is a very complex mental issue that brought painful results. It is one of the leading cause of death among youth. According to WHO, More than 700,000 people die from suicide every year around the globe. Suicide is counted as 4<sup>th</sup> major cause of death among youth aged 15-19. Globally the suicide rate of men is twice higher than that of women. 77% of global suicide happen in middle and lower middle income countries. Suicide is a serious problem, which can only be preventable through evidence based interventions.

The issue of mental health is of prime importance but needs special attention during the time of chaos. In less developed nations where most immediate response to emergencies is required, mental wellbeing and psychosocial management are less prioritized. As a result, two thirds of individuals with serious mental wellbeing conditions in these nations go without any treatment. Covid-19 pandemic is no less than a huge chaos that has brought fear and stress among the people of getting infected and catching the virus. Government strategies of restricting the people at home resulted in least social interactions that multiplied the level of stress among them. Visits outside the homes got restricted, screen timing was increased, and that further isolated people from the outside world.

While spending all the time at home, people got more depressed and anxiety disorder is increased, amount of time people spend using their phones and comparing themselves with others on social media. During days of high stress, people turn to their phones to ease

themselves instead of engaging in conversation with one another or participating in activities that do not involve cellphones. Students are also faced with the burden to outdo in their studies, which can have a negative impact on their mental health. Many students today at verge of anxiety /depression if they are unable to do well in education. Others experience the ill effects of tension due to the strain and probability of frustrating their parents in the event that they don't accomplish the ideal outcomes.

Normal psychological responses identified with the mass quarantine which was forced to weaken the COVID-19 spread are summed up dread and inescapable local area tension which are commonly connected with infection episodes and expanded with the increment in new cases along with deficient, nervousness inciting data which was given by media.

This thing further created much hype and the directly affected the mental health of the masses. The situation was so uncertain irrespective of the precautionary measures being followed since all the known figures were getting infected.

Moreover, many people lost their jobs and they are utterly in anxious conditions. Unemployment not only intensifies the possibility of disease, but it can seriously affect one's mental health, leading to depression and reduced self-confidence. In addition, one can alienate family and friends or feel alienated themselves which can result in lack of support in one's life. People are scared due to the impacts of the pandemic in Pakistan. As such, the fear of COVID-19 is really leading to suicide that is observed in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. Suicide cases allied with COVID-19 are reported in Pakistan. It is predictable that the mental health crises situation in

Pakistan is becoming a serious issue and it will remain even post COVID-19. It is therefore vital to take effective measures to address the mental health issues among youth in the country.

According to WHO Pakistan report on mental health systems, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its extension with regard to individuals who are mentally ill, can be useful directors to action. Concisely put, the declaration makes seven guarantees to individuals who are mentally ill;

- Equal rights.
- Good education.
- Care and treatment for self-development.
- Right to financial security and a good standard of living.
- Right to live with one's own family.
- Right to a capable guardian, if necessary.
- Protection from exploitation, abuse and degrading treatment.

Mental health policy, plan and legislation do exist in Pakistan but are not implemented. The health system is not well established and lacks sufficient resources.

Mental health awareness must be provided at every level including educational institutions and workplace. Youth must be ensured that they are heard and understood fully. Healthy activities must be arranged including sports competition, debates and indulging them into the creative stuff that will gradually enhance their learning abilities. Even during the restrictive measures, books can help a lot. There must be a small literary community once or twice a week dedicated for the books and book reviews. Mental health can be promoted only when

the steps will be taken to do so. The more it's considered a stigma, the more difficult it would be to stop its ever growing deepening roots. Awareness campaigns should be launched for the social understanding towards mental health and it is needed to be make people understand that if any issue happens with mental health, it is just an illness like any other illness and can be cured with treatment.