

## Culture and Mental Health

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### Abstract

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2002) defined culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs. Culture is a complex phenomenon which included knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Loewenthal, 2006). WHO defines mental health as a state of well-being in which every 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 her or his community. Cultural plays an important role in shaping the perceptions, beliefs and practices of people towards mental health. The present article is trying to understand the role culture in mental health care.

**Keywords:** Culture, Well-being, Mental Health, Society

### Introduction

#### Culture

Culture is defined as shared patterns of behaviors and cognitive constructs that shape how people perceive, think about, and act in their social world (Heine, 2010). Culture is a collective understanding of the way the world works, shared among a group of people and passed from one generation to the next. Cultural universals are found in all human societies and it is included expressive forms like art, music, dance, ritual, religion, cooking, shelter, and clothing. Whereas the immaterial aspects of culture such as principles of social organization, mythology, philosophy, literature etc. India is known as a home of all religion and culture and it is believed that, in every twenty five miles we come in contact of people from a diverse culture (Srivastava, 2002). Culture plays a vital role in directing, shaping, and modeling



social behavior at both individual and group levels (Pandey, 1988). Different cultures have some visible features, such as differences in the way dressing, the architectural styles of their buildings, different types of food, how people eat either with chopsticks or use forks or hands. There are also differences in body language, religious practices, and wedding rituals while many distinctions are difficult to perceive because they are usually psychological in nature. There is to understand the uniqueness and diversity of the human mind, we may concern some prominent characteristics of culture, such as first, **Situational identity**: it is changeable and adaptable, for example, someone may have multiple identities, he or she can see oneself as Bengali when at home and speaking his/her native language, on the otherhand during the national cricket match he/she might consider oneself Indian. Second, Sharing nature: it is the product of people sharing knowledge and skills with other. Third, Accumulation: Cultural knowledge is cumulative, it means that a culture's collective learning grows across generations. We understand more about the world today than 100 years ago, but that doesn't mean the culture from long ago has been erased by the new acquisition of information. Patterns: There are systematic and predictable ways of behavior or thinking across members of a culture. Patterns emerge from adapting, sharing, and storing cultural information. Patterns can be both similar and different across cultures. Culture has a prominent role in the perception, experience, response, treatment, and outcome of mental illness (Siewert et al., 1999). Culture not only influences the mental health and illness, but also it is an essential part of it (Sam and Moreira, 2012). So, it is necessary to give details about the culture for understanding the relationship between culture and mental health.

### **Mental health**

Mental health is something in a positive sense, and the absence of mental illness, but the absence of mental illness does not mean the presence of mental health (Keyes, 2005). WHO defines mental health as a state of well-being in which every 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 her or his community. Mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness. It includes how we feel about ourselves and how we do adjust to daily life



events and our mental health influences our thinking, feeling and behaving pattern in daily life. It also affects your ability to cope with stress, overcome challenges and build relationships. It is very important to be mentally or emotionally healthy is much more than being free of depression, anxiety, or other psychological problems.

### **Culture and Mental Health**

Mental health is to be concerned very personal matter that has to do only with the individual while, mental health is determined by the confluence of biological, hereditary factors, psychological, and societal factors. Culture or diversity in cultures influences an individual's mental health. Cultural dynamics play an important role in shaping the perceptions, beliefs and practices of people towards mental illness and its treatment (Satcher, 2001). Several studies show that mental illness is a social construct. Hence, different cultures have their own beliefs to find the etiology of mental illness, as well as treatment and intervention processes (Scott and Marshall, 2004; Jimenez, Bartels, Cardenas, Dhaliwal, and Alegria, 2012) and not only culture, but also time and situation as well as place have influenced the determinants of mental health. There are significant variations in the cultural views of mental illness across cultures (Mehrabiy, 2009). Culture influences the epidemiology, phenomenology, outcome, and treatment of mental illness (Viswanath and Chaturvedi, 2012).

It's important that we understand the important way of culture can impact mental health, such as Cultural stigma: each culture has a different way of perceiving mental health.. This can make it harder for those struggling to talk openly and ask for help because of cultural stigma. Understanding symptoms: culture can influence how people describe and feel about their mental problems. Community Support: cultural factors might determine how much support someone gets from their family and community because of existing cultural stigma. There has been the highest acceptance of society-level preventative measures and mental health care in collectivistic culture at some extent (Zhu et al., 2021). According to Chris et.al, the individualism-collectivism paradigm should be included in any future research aiming to provide a holistic understanding of the causes of mental illness stigma, particularly when the cultures stigmatization levels are particularly high or low. Every culture has a unique way to concern mental illness and its



attitudes to mental illness vary among cultures and such cultural influences not only shape attitudes and perceptions towards the mentally ill, but also affect an individuals' diagnosis, prevention and treatment techniques. Each culture has its own way of making sense of the highly subjective experience that is an understanding of one's mental health. Each has its opinion on whether mental illness is real or imagined, an illness of the mind or the body or both.

### Conclusion

The relationship between culture and mental health is highly concrete. Each culture has a different way of perceiving mental health and Mental health practices are fully dominated by different cultures . Our county has given no importance to mental health services and very few mental health professionals are working in this field; this creates another favorable circumstance for culture to dominant mental health practices. Mental health is to considered as a taboo or stigma in many culture as compare to physical health. It is very necessary to bring awareness among people about physical health and mental health as well.

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