From Stigma to Strength: Rethinking Mental Health

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Key points:

- Introduction
- Definition of Health
- Global Mental Health
- Psychological Flexibility
- Mental Health and Well-being of Health Workers

Introduction

Mental health is an important part of overall health and is closely linked to how people think, feel, and function in daily life. However, mental health should not be understood simply as the absence of mental illness. It is also different from complete psychological well-being. A broader view considers mental health as the psychological capacity that allows individuals to cope with life, function effectively, and pursue their goals and values.[1]



Figure 1: *Type of Mental Health issues and illness [3].*

Health

Health is a state of physical, mental, and social well-being, rather than simply the absence of disease. It includes normal physical functioning, emotional well-being, and the ability to maintain a healthy and productive life. These aspects of health are influenced by lifestyle, genetics, and the surrounding environment.[2]

Global Mental Health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables individuals to cope with everyday stress, recognize their abilities, learn and work effectively, and contribute to their communities.[4] Mental health is an essential part of overall well-being and has both personal and social importance. Global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and environmental changes have increased the need for accessible mental health and psychosocial support.[4] However, significant inequalities remain in mental health funding and access to care, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Recent efforts have focused on strengthening local mental health

services, research capacity, and the involvement of people with lived experience in research and policy development.[4]

Psychological Flexibility

Psychological flexibility plays an important role in maintaining mental health and coping with stress. Difficulties in emotional regulation may increase psychological distress and negatively affect quality of life. Research conducted in Pakistan has shown that psychological flexibility is associated with mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and perceived stress.[5] These findings highlight the importance of psychological flexibility as a potential factor in promoting emotional well-being and improving coping with stressful situations.

Mental Health and Well-Being of Healthcare Workers

Healthcare workers are at increased risk of mental health problems, particularly during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. High workloads, prolonged stress, burnout, trauma, and challenging working conditions can contribute to depression, anxiety, and other psychological difficulties.[7] Protecting the mental health of healthcare workers requires accessible psychological support, self-care strategies, evidence-based interventions, and supportive workplace policies. Long-term measures are also needed to reduce workplace stress and strengthen healthcare systems so that healthcare workers can maintain their mental well-being during future crises.[7]

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