



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

EDITED BOOK



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WOMEN AND MENTAL HEALTH- AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The key to general well-being is good mental health. Women have different societal responsibilities than men and very different mental health requirements. Women's mental health has many facets and is influenced by social and biological factors. Women can be more empowered to regain the rewarding, joyful, and purposeful lives they so richly deserve by being equipped with accurate, current information on the best methods for addressing mental health difficulties. Treatments will produce better results and more positive outcomes for women with mental health concerns as more research becomes available and better knowledge of the issues affecting women's mental health.

INTRODUCTION

The battle against mental illness is one of the biggest obstacles the healthcare sector must overcome. Stigma in society that is associated with mental illness is the most challenging barrier to treatment. Women are disproportionately harmed by patient's refusal to seek treatment for mental health issues, in large part because women are more prone than males to many common mental health diseases. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, approximately 50% more women than men were receiving treatment for mental illness (22.3% vs. 15.1%). Many women aren't aware that their symptoms represent an illness that can be treated, and many are ashamed to seek treatment for mental illnesses. Education on the prevalence of mental illness, its harmful impact on women and their families, and the numerous resources available to help them obtain the treatment they need to be well is a huge step toward improving the diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders in women. According to WHO researchers, women who experienced sexual abuse as children or an abusive spouse as an adult are far more likely to be diagnosed with depression. The study also discovered that the intensity and length of the initial sexual or violent exposure affect the severity of the subsequent mental disease. Whether a person is male or female, elderly or young, affluent or poor, they all experience mental illness differently. Even though the symptoms and effects of various mental health illnesses can be similar, women frequently struggle with how they perceive and experience symptoms and how solutions are developed to treat the disorder.

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

A state of wellbeing known as "mental health" is one in which we can draw on our strengths to face life's obstacles. It has an impact on how you feel, think, conduct, and interact with others and your surroundings. Emotional and psychological well-being are components of mental health. It influences how we deal with stress, interact with people, and make decisions about the future. Every stage of life—from childhood and youth through adulthood—is crucial for maintaining mental health.

SIGNS OF WOMEN'S POOR MENTAL HEALTH

- Moods of sadness
- Irritability
- Worry and anxiety

- Loss of interest in once-enjoyed activities
- Alterations in eating or sleeping habits
- Fatigue
- A low sense of self
- Suicidal or death-related ideas
- Having trouble focusing or making judgments
- Restlessness
- Feeling bad about mistakes they have made
- Overeating or undereating
- Pulling back from people and routine activities
- Lacking or having no energy
- feeling numb or as if nothing is important
- experiencing undiagnosed aches and pains
- sense of helplessness or despair
- Consuming alcohol, tobacco, or drugs more frequently than normal
- Experiencing exceptional levels of confusion, forgetfulness, agitation, rage, sadness, anxiety, or fear

FACTORS AFFECTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF WOMEN

Women's mental health is frequently disregarded which have a negative impact on their life as well as the lives of those around them. Numerous factors, including biological ones like DNA or the chemistry of the brain, life experiences involving trauma or abuse, A history of mental illness in the family can have an impact on mental health problems. Here's a quick look at how specific mental health disorders affect women differently than they do males.

1. Depression

Premenstrual dysphoric disorder, perimenopausal depression, and postpartum depression are a few mental illnesses linked to changes in women's hormone levels. Perinatal depression, sometimes known as postpartum depression, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, and perinatal depression are others. Typical depressed symptoms are feelings of melancholy, hopelessness, uselessness, or emptiness, often sobbing, no longer taking part in favoured pastimes, energy loss, and inability to concentrate, recall, or make decisions. It also includes having trouble falling or staying asleep, having trouble getting out of bed, losing weight, overeating, or losing appetite to "feel better", suicidal, self-destructive, or death thoughts, persistent migraines, motion sickness, or other physical discomforts that don't get better after treatment and being prone to annoyance or anger

2. Bipolar Disorder

Wide mood fluctuations far more dramatic than the ups and downs people typically experience daily are a feature of this ailment, formerly known as "manic-depressive illness." Particularly for those with "bipolar I," the sudden swings in mood and energy level can substantially impair a person's ability to perform. Compared to manic periods, depressive episodes are more common in bipolar II women patients and can be treated without a hospital stay.

3. Postpartum Depression

Some mothers experience this form of perinatal depression within a year of giving birth. Extreme sadness, anxiety, and exhaustion dominate its symptoms, which make it difficult for the mother to take care of herself and her child. A combination of physical and emotional

factors, such as hormonal changes during and after delivery, as well as a loss of sleep in the weeks and months following delivery, and the physical exhaustion and pain associated with pregnancy and giving birth, contribute to the development of this condition.

4. Eating Disorders

Physical health of a person is adversely affected by eating disorders and severe mental health problems. Most of the time, the reasons for the disorders are unknown, but scientists think that biology, psychology, and culture are all implicated. The following are among the risk factors for developing an eating disorder: having a close family member with an eating disorder or another type of mental illness, constant dieting consuming fewer calories than you burn (negative energy balance), having Type 1 (insulin-dependent) diabetes which can be fatal, and having a history of skipping insulin shots (diabulimia), negative body image, having an anxiety disorder diagnosed, experiencing bullying or body shaming because of weight and being prone to perfectionism or rigid behaviour.

5. Anxiety

Six months of "excessive anxiety or worry" is a general anxiety disorder (GAD). Other anxiety disorders include separation anxiety disorder, phobia-related disorders, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social anxiety disorder (or social phobia), and others. Anxiety disorder symptoms include persistent agitation or anxiety, feelings of imminent tragedy or doom, hyperventilating, shivering or sweating, being weak or exhausted, or being unable to concentrate sleeplessness, and aches in the stomach or other digestive issues.

6. Substance Abuse

Despite using drugs less frequently and in smaller doses than males, research indicates that women can quickly develop an addiction to a substance. Furthermore, sex hormones may make women more receptive to the effects of drugs and may increase their desires if they get hooked, which might increase the likelihood of relapse. The mother and the child are more in danger when a woman consumes drugs while expecting or nursing.

7. Body Dysmorphic Disorder

It is a disorder that manifests as a person's intense anxiety over a perceived physical flaw. While both men and women experience the disease equally, societal expectations regarding physical attractiveness may make it more challenging for women to recover. People's capacity to perform at work, at home, and in social life might be affected by their obsession with appearance. Blemishes and other skin issues, body hair (or lack thereof), and the form and size of particular facial features are the most prevalent physical characteristics that cause sufferers anxiety.

8. Hormonal Issues

Depending on their age, health, and a variety of other factors, men and women have different amounts of estrogen and testosterone hormones in their bloodstream. According to certain studies, a hormonal difference between men and women may contribute to mental illness. For instance, women often produce less serotonin than men, presumably due to different hormone levels. Numerous mental health conditions, most notably depression and anxiety, have been linked to serotonin deficit.

9. Suicide

Studies on suicide and intentional self-harm have found a consistently observed pattern of more female attempters and more male suicide completers. According to research by Biswas et al.,

girls from nuclear households and young brides are more likely to try suicide and injure themselves. Disturbed interpersonal connections, psychological diseases, and physical conditions are the leading reasons for suicide.

10. Trauma

Compared to males, women are more likely than men to encounter sexual abuse at some point in their lives. The likelihood of developing a trauma-related mental health condition is increased because an estimated 20% of all women will be victims of rape or attempted rape at some point in their lives. As a result of sexual violence, for instance, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is more common in women.

THE FACTS ABOUT WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REPORT, 2001)

Compared to men, women experience disability from neuropsychiatric disorders at 29.3% vs. close to 41.9% from depressive disorders. Of the 50 million individuals impacted by violent conflicts, civil wars, disasters, and displacement, it is estimated that 80 percent are women and children. The violence against women across their lifetimes varies from 16% to 50%. At least one in five women experience being raped or having a rape attempt.

FACTORS AT RISK FOR WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Numerous things are believed to make women more susceptible to mental health issues. These elements relate to their unique experiences as women in society and their biological makeup. Women's brains differ significantly from men's from a physical perspective, which may contribute to women's vulnerability to particular mental health issues. Women and men may experience mental diseases differently due to differences in the structure of their brains. Women express higher degrees of empathy and emotional understanding than men due to the wiring of their brains. Although typically desirable traits, these traits are directly linked to deteriorating trauma, anxiety, and depressive disorders. The stress and expectations placed on women by society can harm their mental health.

Women make less money than males. In a given year, full-time female employees make around one-fourth less money than their male counterparts. Men have a poverty rate of 10.5%, compared to 14.2% for women between 18 and 64. While the poverty rate for men 65 and over is 7.0%, it is 10.3% for women in this age group.

Victims of violence: In their lives, one in three women has been subjected to physical, sexual, or stalking abuse from an intimate partner. Compared to the general population, they are four times more likely to become victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault. A woman's physical, mental, and emotional well-being can be negatively impacted by trauma.

CHALLENGES TO MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT FOR WOMEN

Financial impediments - lack of insurance/cost

Inadequate understanding of mental health conditions, treatment options, and available resources

Time constraints or other factors (time off work, child care, transportation)

Absence of effective intervention techniques, such as those integrating primary care with mental health services

WHY IS WOMENS MENTAL HEALTH IMPORTANT?

The ability to retain cognitive flexibility, emotional sanity, and a feeling of balance in our lives and relationships is a crucial aspect of women's mental health, which is a vital factor in overall

happiness and pleasure. Only by being content with oneself can one achieve good mental health. Women and children are interrelated; hence it is important to address women's mental health issues individually. Therefore, any inconsistency on the mother's part can negatively impact the health of the infants. It has been shown that depressed women tend to have depressed children. Women continue to experience discrimination in a variety of contexts, such as the job, inequitable pay, and sexual harassment. These elements play a role in why women have more mental health issues than males.

HOW TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH?

Developing coping mechanisms for life's ups and downs is vital for maintaining good mental health. Among the advice provided by the service are the following:

- **Understand:** Ending stigma begins with understanding. We must educate ourselves and gain as much knowledge as possible regarding mental health problems. One should take the time to learn and comprehend if they are unfamiliar with the symptoms of depression, terms like "psychosis."
- **Promote mental well-being:** The best ways to eat, diet, and exercise are constantly promoted in today's health-conscious world. Regular exercise enhances cognitive abilities. But caring for your mental health, including your emotions and inner self, is equally as significant as caring for your physical health. We must be conscious of our and our loved one's emotional well-being. Take steps to protect your family's and your mental health, and inspire others to do the same.
- **Increase your mood by performing regular exercise:** Endorphins are substances released during aerobic activity and aid in reducing stress and fostering tranquility. Regular exercise may also lessen the signs of anxiety and sadness, help with sleep patterns and quality, enhancing cognitive abilities.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Healthy food consumption has been shown to enhance people's mood and physical well-being. Avoid sugary foods because they might cause fatigue and irritability when blood sugar levels decrease. Researchers advise consuming alcohol and coffee in moderation. Additionally, some nutrients, including selenium, omega-3 fatty acids, folate, vitamin B12, calcium, iron, and zinc, seem to reduce the symptoms and indicators of depression. Salmon, fruits, legumes, and green leafy vegetables are all excellent sources of brain nourishment.
- **Find a career you like:** Women can feel purpose and health benefits from a shift in jobs. Switching employment or returning to the workforce can be challenging for women with mental illnesses. Several states and mental health agencies provide vocational rehabilitation, employment support, and free employment and job counselling services.
- **Bring Others in:** Inclusivity is one of the essential aspects of decreasing mental health stigma. Having to deal with the dreadful consequences of shame and humiliation can make it even harder for those who suffer from mental illnesses. Keep in mind to treat everyone equally and to include everyone. Don't be prejudiced. To ensure that no one is excluded, society must become more inclusive. A crucial aspect of expanding inclusion is diversity promotion. A support system entails finding a network of people who can emotionally and practically assist you. It aids in lowering stress and enhancing one's self-image.

- A therapist is there to help with our mental health, just as a doctor helps with our physical health. We must begin to acknowledge the various advantages therapy can provide and adopt a positive outlook on it. Discuss counselling and therapy freely as healthy, non-shaming practices. Therapy is beneficial. Because it is true, we may state it with confidence.
- A higher mood and greater sense of well-being are tied to getting enough sleep. Sleep deprivation can lead to mood swings and frustration.
- Mindfulness training benefits both our physical and mental well-being
- Yoga and meditation are other options. You may align your mind, body, and spirit with the aid of them.
- To enhance mental health, cultivate thankfulness. It is something that will support the growth of one's spirit and mind. It is an emotion of joy and gratitude. You improve your perception of yourself when you express thanks. Gratitude can be expressed both within and externally.

CONCLUSION

Women are particularly vulnerable due to physiological changes and cultural problems, including poverty, sexual assault, stress, violence towards intimate partners, etc. The ability to retain cognitive flexibility, emotional sanity and a feeling of balance in our lives and relationships is a crucial aspect of women's mental health, which is a vital factor in overall happiness and pleasure. Without the person being aware of it, their mental health may impact a variety of facets of daily life. An individual's physical and mental health can both benefit from having a positive outlook on life, which has a fundamentally positive impact on mental health. Therefore, it should be abundantly evident that social, political, and economic issues cannot be separated from women's mental health considerations. Education, training, and interventions focusing on the social and physical environment are essential to address women's mental health. Given that many mental diseases are treatable and manageable, it is imperative to continue study on the mental health of women.

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