

# **MENTAL HEALTH OF PRISONERS.**

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# RESEARCH BOARD-1

**TASK-2**

## WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

“It is a state of well being in which the 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 his or her community”- World Health Organization.

“It is a positive state of mind and body, feeling safe and able to cope with a sense of connection with people , communities and wider environment”- National Health Service.

## WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

“Mental illness comprises a broad range of problems, with different symptoms. However, they are generally characterized by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others. Example are schizophrenia , depression, intellectual disabilities and disorders due to drug abuse”- World Health Organization.

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS.

### MENTAL HEALTH

- It subjects upon mental wellness.
- It is a broad term referring to social, psychological and emotional wellbeing of individuals.

### MENTAL ILLNESS

- It subjects upon mental disorder.
- It is a clinically diagnosable illness affecting how a person thinks and feels, behaves and interacts with other people and this can range from anxiety or depression, eating disorders to bipolar and schizophrenia.

## MENTAL HEALTH : DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

India is the second largest populated country in the world nearly 1.83 billion people, over 5000 psychiatrists catering for this significant population, there is a significant mental health gap in implementing effective treatment of mental disorders and promoting overall mental health of the population. Moreover the access to the mental health resources is much difficult to the vulnerable population such as migrant labours, pregnant women, and refugees where the need is much higher than the general population.

## INDIAN PRISONERS: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

According to the 2017 analysis 600,000 individuals were lodged in Indian prisons, prisoners come from a heterogeneous group and from different social and economically backward backgrounds. It is observed that the most common disorder is schizophrenia followed by depression. In a study conducted by Bardale and Dixit they observed that 179 autopsies performed nearly 14 cases were suicide by prisoners, 71.42% of them were in lockups while 28.57% were in the prison.

## INDIAN PRISON SYSTEM DERAILMENTS.

- Overcrowding
- Delay in trials
- Torture and ill treatment
- Neglect of health and hygiene
- Insufficient food and inadequate clothing
- Prison vices
- Deficiency in communication
- Streamlining of jail visits
- Management of open prisons



## MENTAL HEALTH AND PRISON

### **PRISONS ARE SOMETIMES USED AS DUMPING GROUNDS FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISORDERS**

There are countries where people with severe mental disorders are inappropriately locked up in prison simply because of the lack of mental health services. These disorders therefore continue to go unnoticed undiagnosed and untreated. People with substance abuse disorders or people who at in part due to a mental disorder, have committed minor offences are sent to prison rather than treatment for their disorder.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND PRISON

### **PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISORDERS ARE EXPECTED TO STIGMA AND BIGOTRY**

Within most societies people with mental disorders face marginalisation, stigma and discrimination in the social, economic and health spheres due to widespread misconception related to mental disorders. This stigma usually prevails in prison with the person often facing still further marginalisation and isolation due to imprisonment.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND PRISON

### **EFFECTIVE TREATMENT IS POSSIBLE, INSTEAD RESOURCES ARE WASTED**

There are many treatments for mental disorders, but often the limited available resources get wasted, expensive intervention and services only reach a small proportion of those who all are in need. The building of separate psychiatric prison hospitals in particular is not cost effective because they are very expensive to run, have limited capacity, are associated with low release rates, leave patients with a feeling of stigma and deprivation. Furthermore, there is no evidence that these hospitals improve treatment outcomes, rather they may put them in under the purview of human rights violations.

# MENTAL HEALTH AND PRISON

## PRISONS ARE BAD FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Overcrowding, various forms of violence, enforced solitude or conversely, lack of privacy, lack of meaningful activity, isolation from social networks, insecurity about future prospects and inadequate health service in prisons, increasing number of suicides is unfortunately one common manifestation of the cumulative effects of these factors.

## PRISON REFORMS

### **PROVIDE PRISONERS WITH APPROPRIATE MENTAL HEALTH AND CARE**

Access to assessment, treatment and referral of people with mental disorders, including substances abuse should be an integral part of general services available to all prisoners. The health services provided to prisoners should as a minimum, be of an equivalent level to those in the community. This may be achieved by providing mental health training to prison health workers, establishing regular visits of a community mental health teams to prisons or enabling prisoners to access health services outside the prison setting. Primary health care providers in prisons should be provided with basic training in the recognition and basic management of common mental health disorders.

## PRISON REFORMS

### **PROVIDE ACCESS TO ACUTE MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN PSYCHIATRIC WARDS OF HOSPITALS**

When prisoners require acute care they should be temporarily transferred to psychiatric hospitals wards of general hospitals with appropriate security levels. In accordance with the principles of institutionalisation special psychiatric prison hospitals are strongly discouraged.

## PRISON REFORMS

### ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND RATIONALLY PRESCRIBED

#### PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATION

Prisoners through appropriately trained health care providers should have the same access to psychotropic medication and psychosocial support for the treatment of mental disorders as people in the general community.

## PRISON REFORMS

### **PROVIDE INFORMATION TO PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILY ON MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**

Prisoners and their families should receive information and education on the nature of mental health disorders with a view to reducing stigma and discrimination, preventing mental disorders and promoting mental health. Information can help prisoners and their families better understand their emotional response to imprisonment and provide practical strategies.



## PRISON REFORMS

### ENCOURAGE INTER-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

Many problems and issues can be solved by bringing relevant ministries and other actors together to discuss the needs of prisoners with mental health disorders. Different stakeholders should meet to discuss mental health in prisons and to plan an inter-sectoral response.

## CONCLUSION

Both prison reform and penal reform are crucial elements if the many problems affecting the Indian prisoners are to be resolved. Diminishing the overall prison population will allow improvements of the security of all the individuals in custody. The financial resources will have to be allocated to the prison systems as well. One effective way to curb the rise in prison population would be to offer alternatives to imprisonment for nonviolent and civil offenders. Mental health being one of the alarming issue, if ignored may lead to mass devastation of the democracy.