

Title: *Awareness of Mental Health Disorders among the Indian Population: A Cross-Sectional Study*

Introduction:

Mental health disorders are often stigmatized and misunderstood in many communities, including in India. With rapid social changes and evolving healthcare landscapes, there is a critical need to understand how well the general population is informed about these disorders. According to a study conducted in 2017, 14.3% of the Indian population is suffering from mental disorders. [1]

While many countries have made progress in reducing stigma and promoting acceptance of those with mental health issues, a significant lack of awareness persists in India and several other developing nations.

One study found mental health literacy among adolescents to be very low, i.e. depression was identified by 29.04% and schizophrenia/psychosis was recognized only by 1.31%. Stigma was noted to be present in help-seeking. [2] The National Mental Health Survey of India (2016) revealed that nearly 1 in 20 individuals suffer from depression, with productive age groups being the most affected. Also it was reported that, mental health is an urgent concern in India, as every sixth Indian needs mental health help.[3] One of the critical factors contributing to this treatment gap is the pervasive stigma and lack of awareness surrounding mental health issues. Misconceptions and negative portrayals in media have further exacerbated these challenges, leading to social exclusion and discrimination against individuals with mental health disorders.

It has been stated that the ability to recognize mental disorders is a central part of mental health literacy because it is a prerequisite for appropriate help-seeking. [4]

India's National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) bears de-stigmatisation of mental illness as an objective to be achieved through information, education and communication (IEC) activities as well as public awareness led by the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP). The NMHP has made strides towards expanding mental health service delivery and in promoting mental health-seeking behaviour. Persistent discrimination against persons with mental illness has been recognised as a challenge to strengthen the programme in both rural and urban areas. [5]

Understanding public perceptions and knowledge gaps can inform targeted educational interventions, reduce stigma, and promote early help-seeking behaviors. This study aims to provide insights that will inform effective public health strategies across India.

Problem Statement: Despite growing mental health challenges, there is a shortage of reliable data on the public's understanding of these disorders in India. This gap in knowledge hinders the development of targeted interventions to improve mental health literacy and reduce stigma. Addressing this issue is essential for promotion of early recognition and treatment of mental health conditions.

Research Question: What is the current level of awareness regarding mental health disorders among adults in India, and which demographic and socioeconomic factors are associated with variations in this awareness?

Objectives:

1. To assess the level of awareness and understanding of mental health disorders.
2. To evaluate the associations between socio-demographic variables and mental health awareness indicators.

Study Design: This investigation is designed as a cross-sectional study, which involves collecting data from a sample of participants at a single point in time.

Sample Size: 350 participants

Eligibility Criteria: Individuals aged 18 years and above residing in India.

Data Collection Method: A structured questionnaire will be administered via Google Forms. The survey will include a series of questions designed to evaluate awareness levels using a Likert scale, alongside demographic and socioeconomic questions. The online survey link will be circulated through social media, email networks, and other digital platforms to reach a diverse sample across India. Data collection is planned to be completed over an approximate period of 1 month.

Data Confidentiality: All data will be recorded anonymously to protect participant privacy.

Analysis Plan:

Basic demographic data and awareness levels will be summarized using appropriate descriptive statistics.

Chi Square Test: To assess associations between categorical variables (e.g., awareness levels vs. demographic characteristics).

Regression Analysis: To identify predictors and quantify the relationship between various factors (such as age, education, socioeconomic status) and the level of mental health awareness.

References

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- [3] R. S. Murthy, "National Mental Health Survey of India 2015–2016," 2016.
- [4] A. Jorm, "Mental health literacy. Public knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders," *Br J Psychiatry*, 2000.