



INDIAN WOMEN'S VARIOUS ROLES AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract: Without women, life is unimaginable. The central place of women in society has always safeguarded a country's stability, advancement, and long-term growth. Indian ladies conjure images of selfless, multitasking, loving, and idealised women in our minds, but a study by Neilson found that they are the most stressed women in the world. Socioeconomic pressures on women are disproportionately high. Data from domestic and foreign sources demonstrates that men and women experience and are affected by various mental health issues differently. Even in comparison to males, women face a higher amount of stress at work. This present paper talks about the main factors that contribute to mental stress in Indian women.

Index Terms: Mental Health, Indian Women, Various Roles of Indian Women

Introduction: Without women, life is unimaginable. The central place of women in society has always safeguarded a country's stability, advancement, and long-term growth. Women are the centre of the house, the primary community building block. Women work as caregivers, farmers, teachers, and business owners. Indian ladies conjure images of selfless, multitasking, loving, and idealised women in our minds, but a study by Neilson found that they are the most stressed women in the world. According to a survey, 87 per cent of Indian women felt stressed out most of the time, and 82 per cent said they didn't have time to unwind. Socioeconomic pressures on women are disproportionately high. Now, the question of why this is occurring to our ladies arises. Are we placing too many demands on them? Indian women are making great strides, but is she mentally well enough to care for herself and her family? Not just individuals but also society as a whole are impacted by mental health issues. Let's now attempt to comprehend the idea of mental wellness.

The absence of mental diseases is only one aspect of mental wellness. Some mental health concepts are subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependency, and acknowledgement of the capacity to reach one's intellectual and emotional potential. Mental health should affect everyone, not only those who have mental disorders. It is about strengthening people's capacities and enabling communities to realise their self-determined goals. However, according to WHO, if women's health issues are discussed, activities frequently centre on problems with reproduction, family planning, and childbearing, leaving women's mental health problems out. Even women who are financially stable and moving up the social ladder are afraid to break social boundaries, making them perpetually vulnerable regarding their mental health.

Data from domestic and foreign sources demonstrates that men and women experience and are affected by various mental health issues differently. Men are more frequently afflicted by behavioural problems and drug usage than women, who are more likely to have anxiety and depressive disorders. Women are twice as likely to experience unipolar depression, which is expected to overtake chronic pain as the second leading cause of disability globally by 2020. Compared to males, who are 29.3% disabled by depression, women are 41.9% disabled by depression. Even in comparison to males, women face a higher amount of stress at work.

The following are the main factors that contribute to mental stress in Indian women-

Social Structure: Men and women experience stress from many of the same factors, including concerns about money, job stability, health, and relationships. Women's many roles are perhaps a little more particular to them. In today's society, women's roles frequently entail caring for their families, young children, and ageing parents, as well as their jobs and other responsibilities. Women may experience a sense of being overburdened with time constraints and unfulfilled duties when demands to perform these roles rise. The patriarchal joint family system, requirement of marriage, preference for male children, and practice of dowry in India add to the mental stress of women. In our system, women are positioned last. In a 2016 research, the National Commission for Women found that the overwhelming societal stigma associated with having a mentally ill female family member is the main reason families knowingly abandon them. Indian mental health experts claim that it is typical for women to be left after receiving a mental disease diagnosis. "If the patient is a man, a mother, a wife, or a sister is usually there

to care for him," says Reni Thomas, a researcher who has examined the mental health of Indian women. "Many mentally ill women are (seen as being) useless to the family. On the contrary, they cause their families to suffer.

Some women are left behind because they are mentally ill, while others show signs of mental illness due to being left behind and made to live on the streets. According to a study published in the Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, men are always valued in Indian society. However, women face various challenges. People with mental health issues are stigmatised as unfit to engage in social life and excluded. More prejudice is directed at persons with mental health issues than those with other forms of physical or intellectual disability. Due to lack of space or parental concern for his safety in their houses, very few men are still living in shelter homes.

In our social framework, women have a secondary position and are viewed as inferior to men. It is often remarked that when an average woman is not safe in our society, who will care for the mentally sick woman? Families don't want to shoulder their burden when they are mentally ill. Because medical facilities are scarce and mental illness carries a societal stigma, patients who are women are frequently left behind. When these types of incidents occur in society, the average woman also finds herself in a safe position at some point, which undermines her confidence and raises her insecurity.

Low self-esteem: Many circumstances, beginning in early childhood, can impact self-esteem. The girl child is typically considered undesirable in our societal structure because most families always want a male child. Furthermore, nobody has any faith in the girls' abilities. A boy has many opportunities to do whatever he wants in life. However, if she fails, a girl has few options to try something again. A woman with low self-esteem can never recognise her potential, skills, and abilities. The extensive list of do's and don'ts for women prevents them from ever trying anything new, which prevents them from ever realising their potential and diminishes their sense of self-worth. They begin to lose respect for themselves when this occurs frequently. Stress occurs when a situation lasts for a long time. Extended maternity leave and postpartum depression also contribute to women's low self-esteem.

Dependency: Women are regarded as two families' cultural ambassadors. The one in which they are married and the one in which they are born. They are trained from the start that only when they are associated with a male person can a male candidate patronise them for social acceptability. Their standing is directly related to the associated male member.

The female in the family is reliant on the males from the outset. A sister's safety is provided by her brother, a woman's life rests on her husband, and if the husband were to desert the wife, a mother's life would depend on her son. The widow is left behind, the divorced woman is continually held responsible, the single person is frequently asked about health issues, and married women are regularly switched between the family of origin and the family of procreation. Even if a woman is physically and financially able to handle things independently, it is nevertheless required of her to live with any socially acceptable male member. Constantly hearing criticism from society for not adapting breaks them at some point. Additionally, the woman's mental health is impacted.

Finances: Most women depend on men for their financial security; even when they work, they do not influence their pay. According to research from India Today, women in India earn 20% less than men, showing that gender is a significant factor in deciding income in that country. If a woman is not employed, she is viewed as a burden on the family and her household contributions are not considered. The non-earning women are continually under pressure to work and earn money to establish value. Now, if a woman is making money and her family allows her to work, this is considered a privilege that the woman is receiving, and she should pay for it. Most of the time, even working women are deemed financially illiterate and rely on their male family members to make critical financial decisions.

Different types of mental stress or the social fabric:

Various physical stages: A woman experiences several bodily changes during her lifetime, from adolescence to menopause. Her life is profoundly changed by pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period, yet she is never advised to put her needs above those of others. Even following childbirth, everyone seems concerned about the child's health, while the mother's health problems go unnoticed. Postpartum depression is an actual condition that affects the vast majority of new moms. It involves the mother and the relationship between the mother and the newborn. She is expected to put everyone and everything else above her own mental and physical well-being. She spends her entire life working tirelessly to improve the lot of her family, and by the time she reaches middle age, no one can relate to her. A few years ago, a video that depicted how the mother was being demanded and expected to provide every assistance possible by the husband, the in-laws, and the college-age children while the mother was in pain and exhausted circulated on social media. The woman finally broke down in tears in front of the entire family and yelled that she was going through menopause and needed their support to cope with the discomfort when the demands were too much. The woman shouted in the awareness-raising film, but women must suffer in silence because it is not acceptable in our culture for women to discuss these issues in public. After all, doing so will be viewed as shameless. However, suppose the supposedly contemporary and progressive woman learns to care for herself. In that case, she is once more reminded of the privilege she is taking, which makes the woman feel guilty. When a woman emerges from this shame, she is viewed as selfish.

Beauty Standards: An Indian woman should be fair, trim, and attractive. These are the qualities that society views as desirable for getting a woman married. The media continually teaches women how to appear, even if club accepts them as they are in later life. The adorable mommies on the screen make birth mothers sad because they want to be like them. In advertisements, people are told that having two shades of lighter skin will help them succeed. Nobody tells them how much more lovely they are or how their actions have enhanced their beauty. Young women grow up believing they must be physically attractive to be accepted by society. Physical attractiveness, guided by modern sociocultural standards, is associated with a higher level of psychological well-being, social ease, assertiveness, and confidence. **Danilova, Tatiana. (2020)**

The most attractive adornment is a smile, but no one ever explains this.

Nutrition: A proper, nutrient-rich food is essential for a healthy body and mind, but for Indian women, this is the last thing on their minds. In traditional Indian homes, the 'Annapoorna' is referred to as such because she manages the diet of every family member. Sadly, 'Annapoorna' never learns that she must take care of her nutrition, even though doing so will help her do that role much better. Eating a healthy, balanced meal is not being selfish. The traditional 'Annapurna' eats only after ensuring that everyone in the family is nourished; this is how her job has been exalted for centuries. A woman has to eat a healthy diet to meet the physical obstacles she faces at various stages of her life; otherwise, her body and mind will suffer.

Childrearing: It is generally considered that women are solely responsible for raising children. If the child is doing well, the family deserves praise, and the mother is to blame if the youngster is headed in the wrong direction. No matter what high position she may occupy, it is always assumed that mothers will leave their jobs to raise their children. For a working mother, juggling a child, a family, and a job becomes more challenging. Most working mothers feel guilty because they worry they aren't spending enough time with their kids. Because a housewife is assumed to have unlimited free time, it is anticipated that a mother who is a housewife can handle the home and the child on her own.

Marriage System: An "Indian Bahu" must possess a magic stick that can handle every aspect of a home. She must be attractive, an excellent hostess, a good manager of all domestic matters, a decent tutor, and a silent, submissive servant. Married women shoulder a lot of responsibility and mental stress. Because they fall short of others' and their standards, they experience feelings of failure. Women frequently devote more time to taking care of the needs of others than of their own. Women under a lot of stress cannot even know their needs.

The fact that married women make up the largest victim category for suicide fatalities among all women is particularly significant. Because of arranged and young marriages, young motherhood, and economic dependency, this population is more vulnerable.

Comparison: In the sentence of 'uski sari meri sari se safed kaise' advertising, the problem of 'safed kaise' persists. Our daughters still don't understand that they are the best in their own right. When a homemaker compares herself to a working woman, she perceives herself as inferior. Still, the active women observe the housewife as considerably happier and free of the dual struggles. As long as we continue to value material items and physical objects more highly than we love each human's inner beauty and proper attributes, there will be a problem.

Everyone can contribute to eliminating this issue, but there are only a few practical answers.

Women's empowerment: This term refers to more than just a woman's ability to work; it also includes her participation in decision-making. Women should be the sole ones in charge of their own lives, with no one else having the authority to decide for them. Girls should have a good education and the ability to discern between right and wrong and act accordingly. Policies won't be of any use until people are informed. Self-care and not feeling guilty about it should be taught to our daughters.

Support from family: This is what matters most to women in their lives. They should feel wanted in the family from the moment of their birth. They should be honoured and acknowledged for their work for the family and their sacrifices. The family should provide enough support so members do not feel pressured to perform. Women should be accepted for who they are. More importantly, a woman should always know that her family will always be there for her and that she doesn't have to stay in abusive situations. The woman's friends and "me time" should be accepted by the family. The research results by **Verma and Gupta (2020)** showed that women felt pressured to adhere to traditional social roles and norms. Despite being willing to adapt their individual selves, women could not do so because of the guilt induced by the family and society for not following a traditional image, thereby reflecting the interrelation of the self of women in Indian society.

Women frequently devote more time to taking care of the needs of others than of their own. Women under a lot of stress can not even know their needs. The family should give the woman the freedom to live as she chooses and cease pressuring her to conform to society's expectations for decades.

Talking treatments and counselling: Counseling can be beneficial in resolving emotional difficulties. Speaking therapy is far more effective for women than for men. Sometimes, the only medicine needed is an ear to listen without passing judgment. Talking about one's ideas and feelings allows one to examine one's conduct and thinking and find a solution.

Government and policymakers: There should be rigorous laws against gender discrimination against women at all levels. At all levels, there is gender discrimination to blame for the way that women are treated. Due to social pressure, even a woman does not wish to have a girl child. To achieve gender equality, laws have been put in place. The Supreme Court's rulings are to be applauded since they recognise that both sexes have an equal claim to ancestral property and that sons and even married daughters are responsible for their parents. These laws ought to be strictly enforced and present in the courts.

Better Facilities: "Families are not always villains in this story," says Dr KV Kishore Kumar, executive director of a group that assists abandoned women diagnosed with mental illness. He continues, "The state has failed the family, so the families have failed their women." Dr Kumar said more excellent housing, career prospects, and accessible mental health facilities will only strengthen family support.

There should be a large number of mental health facilities available to treat patients with respect and confidentiality. Less than 2,000 clinical psychologists work nationwide, with roughly 5,000 psychiatrists. Given the magnitude of the population, this is minuscule. The fact that just a tiny portion of the public health budget is allocated to mental health does not help.

Creating awareness: Treating mental illness like a disease rather than a burden is essential. People with mental health issues are stigmatised as unfit to engage in social life and excluded. In India, the societal stigma associated with mental health illnesses

is a significant barrier to treatment. More prejudice is directed at persons with mental health issues than those with other forms of physical or intellectual disability.

In addition, males should be taught about the numerous emotional and physical struggles women face during their various stages of life so they can better comprehend her.

Social networks and media: Social networks and media significantly impact how society thinks. Stop portraying women with dark skin as miserable and unsuccessful in advertisements.

The urgent need is to raise awareness of and educate people about the warning signs and symptoms of mental illness while normalising the concept of seeking help for oneself and those close to them. To help build a more inclusive atmosphere for people with mental illness, there has to be more open debate and dialogue on this topic with members of the general public instead of simply experts.

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