



Committee: World Health Organization (WHO)

Topic: Social stigma and limited mental health awareness in young people

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Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a functional agency of the United Nations caring for international public health. The World Health Organization guides and champions global efforts to reach better health for all human beings. This organization is in charge of joining different people and countries in every part of the population for the equitable opportunity of a safe and healthy life. WHO connects 194 countries and works on the front lines in more than 150 locations, it is beneficial to get over the health issues of our time and to measure the advance of the well-being of all the people in the world. Social stigma and mental health awareness in young people is a topic that has been discussed since early times. Before the 20th century, the definition of social stigma became part of the English language, however, the discipline was studied before 1946.

First and foremost, the meaning of social stigma is when society is in disagreement or when they discriminate against a specific group of people who have different or distinctive characteristics that distinguish them from the rest of society. The sociologist Erving Goffman, defined stigma as having the power to make young people disbelieve in themselves, as it is associated with social isolation, low self-esteem, and lack of communication skills. This will lead them to think they can not be capable enough to do things such as perform with excellence in school, find better jobs or go into further education. Everyone has the right to have a fulfilled life.

Mental health is a vital factor in every person's life that can immensely impact the way that someone goes through life. Thankfully, this dilemma has slowly been studied and researched more to understand how truly impacting mental health is. Nonetheless, the people who are getting a complete help that they need is minimal considering the number of people that fully need aid, as approximately 1 of 7 teenagers between 10-19 years old around the world, had or have experienced a mental health condition.

Adolescence is an important time in human development as they experience physical, emotional, and social changes. Many psychological, social, and physical studies have proven that adolescence is one of the most vital stages of development, as it is the stage where their brains and bodies are maturing to their fullest, and it's important to take care of teenagers' mental health as well as their access to mental help.

Development

Health systems are still struggling to reach individuals who are distinctly fighting this severe disorder. Factors to mental health and mental disorders include more variables than the “ability to manage one’s thoughts, emotions, behaviors and interactions with others, but also social, cultural, economic, political and environmental factors such as national policies, social protection, living standards, working conditions, and community social supports.” There is a lack of infrastructure for mental health treatment worldwide. The most recent Mental Health Atlas by WHO demonstrated that the budget in order to treat mental illnesses is extremely low. Surveys and investigations created by WHO representatives worldwide stated that in countries with a developed economy the budget is minor to 2 US dollars and in developing countries less than 25 cents. There is an absence of psychiatrists per 200,000 residents, there is less than one psychiatrist worldwide.

This means that globally, getting the medical aid that a citizen might need is not as easy as it may seem, since many other components can be an obstacle in people's lives. In many cases, the reason why people avoid treatment is because of fear of being judged by society, they dread the stigma as well as the discrimination that they might have to face if society knew they were receiving help with their mental health. According to the American Psychiatric Organization.

More than half of the population with mental health illnesses or disorders do not receive any type of aid for their condition. According to our committee, WHO, in lower and middle-income economies around 76% and 85% of the population do not receive or have access to mental health treatments, and on the other hand, in high-income

economy countries, 35% to 50% of the population. This data demonstrates how neglected these communities have been, and even excluding the fact that they might have better living standards than others, they all still wind up struggling to obtain the assistance they require.

These obstacles can be seen as slight complications, but they play a big role in the patient's life, considering that the World Health Organization has been strictly researching the data that these individual factors create. For this reason, WHO implemented an action plan for the years 2013-2020, whose main goal was to acknowledge the importance of mental health, create awareness, protect these people's rights, and obtain "high quality, culturally-appropriate health, and social care in a timely way to promote recovery". Thanks to this program, more people have received help, and their human rights are not being compromised. The main goal of this program was to fulfill the most feasible level of health, engage society, and reduce discrimination.

In many cases, teenagers have minimal knowledge of this topic, many are not aware that their mental health might be causing them harm. Many teens are unable to recognize the causes as well as the symptoms of the problems handling mental health, furthermore, as a result of their limited comprehension of mental health, they also presume that the recovery is strained. It is immensely crucial that young adult teenagers specifically start to understand and have the correct knowledge on this topic since, according to BMS Psychiatry, it has been proven that 75% of adults that struggle with a mental health disorder first experienced their first symptoms in their teen years, between the ages of 10-24. In young teens the social stigma against mental health is even more prevalent than in any other age range, in comparison to adults, when facing any mental disorders, young teens usually do not look for any help, thanks to some factors such as peer pressure, lack of confidence, the desire of being independent or self-reliant, and the absence of knowledge on being aware of the different mental-health related services.

Mental health is a crucial problem that needs to become a more outspoken topic when the world thinks of mental health, they might not fully understand the damages and the risks that accompany this disease alone. It has been proven that higher rates of disability and mortality are part of people with any type of mental disorder. As stated in the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly, people living with schizophrenia and major depression are more likely to have a premature death, making it 40% to 60% more probable. Furthermore, it has been proven that depression can also be a factor for other diseases such as diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and HIV infection/AIDS.

Conclusion

Considering all the information presented above, it's evident that an efficient and effective solution must be created. The first step for creating an actual solution is creating awareness among the public, however, it is not enough. Thanks to the high impact of social media on teenagers, they have more access to the topic, as nowadays, there is a lot of information about mental disorders, and their causes and consequences. This generation has started to prioritize their mental health, although as seen before, the minority seeks help. In an action plan made by the UN, they discussed how this could be resolved, their leading solution was that "Children and adolescents with mental disorders should be provided with early intervention through evidence-based psychosocial and other non-pharmacological interventions based in the community". Adding to this, the UN also commented on focusing on "anti-discrimination laws and information campaigns that redress the stigmatization and human rights violations" as well as promoting the rights and opportunities and the care of individuals with mental disabilities.

Efficient solutions must include the development of mental health infrastructure, literacy programs regarding social stigma and mental illnesses, advocacy of people's rights, and the importance of targeting certain population groups, such as teenagers and health care providers. Concluding this topic, we invite your delegation into having a professional debate to find a plausible solution to aid young people who are battling their mental health, reinstating that awareness campaigns are just a part of a solution, but not the solution as a whole.

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