

# Impact Of Mental Illness on Society and Social Institutions

Rani Khushboo<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>JRF PhD Scholar, Dept.of Sociology, Sido Kanhu Murmu University, Dumka India

**Abstract**—According to the World Health Organization (WHO) human health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being. This definition of health remains largely relevant in contemporary times, as modern human society navigates increasingly complex situations. The presence of diverse disease patterns and rising individual complexities has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in societal complexities. This research is grounded in the understanding that mental illness has a profound impact on both individuals and the societies in which they reside. By examining the complex interplay between mental health, individuals, and society the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the far-reaching consequences of mental illness and its effect on societal dynamics.

**Index Terms**—Individuals, Human health, complexities, diverse disease, Mental illness, societal dynamics.

## I. INTRODUCTION

It would not be an exaggeration to assert that humans are the most complex living beings on Earth, surpassing all other creatures in terms of intricacy. Initially, humans inhabited jungles and led a life akin to that of animals. However, their innate curiosity and cognitive abilities enabled them to differentiate themselves from other living beings (Celeste Kidd 1, 2015). As humans progressed, they endeavored to add meaning to their existence, seeking to make their lives more significant. To achieve this, they began inventing and creating novel things, establishing societies to bring stability to their lives. To ensure harmonious coexistence within these societies, humans formulated numerous societal values, rituals, rules, and regulations. As we transitioned from a simple to a complex society, our human experience underwent significant transformations. Concomitantly, our lives, once relatively straightforward, became increasingly intricate. We witnessed advancements in development and luxury,

driving us to continually enhance our lives. Innovations and new discoveries permeated every aspect of our existence, profoundly impacting human life. In the 21st century, we became acquainted with the internet, observing its rapid proliferation into households worldwide. Today, the world is literally at our fingertips, with information and connectivity accessible with a single click. It is an understatement to assert that the world has become increasingly interconnected (Renu Joshi, 2022). The relentless phases of transition have yielded substantial gains for humanity, but they have also been accompanied by a plethora of formidable challenges. Prominent among these challenges is the escalating issue of mental stress, which has become a pervasive concern in contemporary society (DevInsights). Mental stress has pervasive consequences, influencing virtually every domain of human existence. Its impact on both physical and mental well-being is multifaceted, arising from a complex interplay of factors, including rumination, an unrelenting pursuit of material possessions, and personal problems (Staff, 2023).

### A. Symptoms of mental illness

The notion of human health encompasses both physical and mental well-being. While physical ailments can often be readily identified and treated by medical professionals through routine examinations, mental well-being presents a more complex scenario. Unlike physical health issues, mental health concerns are often more challenging to diagnose, as the individual's mental state may not be readily apparent. This complexity stems from the inherent difficulty in discerning the intricacies of an individual's mental landscape, making it arduous to comprehend their mental status and the underlying issues they may be confronting. Mental stress, when exacerbated, can manifest as anxiety attacks or severe depression. However, identifying the symptoms of mental stress can be challenging, as individuals often exhibit not

only psychological distress but also physiological responses. The body's response to stress triggers the release of numerous hormones, which can precipitate a wide range of symptoms. This complex interplay between psychological and physiological factors can render the diagnosis of mental stress a formidable task. Stress-induced somatic symptoms: Physical complaints that arise from psychological distress, rather than underlying medical conditions, underscoring the need for holistic approaches to health and wellness (Staff, 2023).

On your body	On your mood	On your behavior
Headache	Anxiety	Overeating or Under eating
Muscle tension or pain	Restlessness	Angry outbursts
Chest pain	Lack of motivation or focus	Drug or alcohol misuse
Fatigue	Memory problems	Tobacco use
Change in sex drive	Feeling overwhelmed	Avoiding friends and staying at home
Stomach upset	Grumpiness or anger	Exercising less often
Sleep problems	Sadness or depression	

(Source: Mayo clinic staff, 2023)

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

It is patently evident that contemporary human society has reached a juncture where individuals have access to an array of amenities and technologies that were unimaginable to their primitive counterparts. However, it is equally imperative to acknowledge that despite achieving dominance over external challenges, modern humans continue to grapple with internal struggles, specifically within the realm of mental health.

This study seeks to investigate the intricate relationship between individual mental states and the societal equilibrium. The primary motivation behind this study is to elucidate the manner in which the mental health and stress levels of individuals, as

members of society, impact the overall stability and harmony of the societal framework.

In essence, this research aims to explore the dynamic interplay between individual mental well-being and collective societal equilibrium, with a specific focus on the consequences of mental stress on social stability.

## III. METHODOLOGY

his research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The quantitative component of the study involves the analysis of secondary data and desk research to examine pertinent facts and figures.

Complementing this, the qualitative aspect of the study focuses on exploring the human dimension of the topic, achieved through the analysis of video journals and case studies available on platforms such as YouTube. Furthermore, to add depth to the study's purpose, the author conducted unstructured interviews with readily available individuals in the vicinity, thereby gathering and analyzing their experiential insights (Team, 2025).

A. How mental states of individuals impact the societal equilibrium:

Emile Durkheim, a renowned French sociologist, aptly described society as 'sui generis', implying that it possesses a unique, self-contained existence. Societal equilibrium, in this context, refers to a state of balance wherein all components of society function in harmony (Allen, 2023). Likewise again one functional thinker Talcott Parsons, who was an American sociologist, proposed that while no concrete system can ever achieve perfect equilibrium, all social systems have a tendency to approach it. Parsons did not view the perfectly equilibrated society as a depiction of an actual system, but rather as a theoretical point of reference (Britannica).

Societal equilibrium is crucial for the overall progress and well-being of society's members. However, various issues have emerged over time, disrupting this balance. At the current juncture, where the global community stands, mental stress and poor mental well-being can be perceived as a significant challenge (Margarita Alegría, 2018). Society is

comprised of individuals, and all members residing within it must adhere to its structural patterns. Scholars posit that these structures are, in fact, mental constructs or abstract entities, while others argue that they are tangible and visible.

The interplay between individual mental health and societal equilibrium is complex and bidirectional. On one hand, societal structures and norms can significantly influence individual mental well-being. On the other hand, the mental health of individuals can, in turn, impact the overall equilibrium of society. Societies comprise various institutions that facilitate their formation and perpetuation. Individuals engage in social interactions and actions, which enable them to participate in these institutions. However, in contemporary times, we observe significant disruptions in the balancing of these institutions.

#### B. Impact of Mental illness on Indian society and social institutions:

When examining Asian societies, particularly Indian society, mental illness remains a stigmatized and sensitive topic, far from being normalized as in Western and developed societies. Unfortunately, beyond a few metropolitan cities, a significant portion of India, including remote rural areas, small towns, and medium-sized cities, continues to view mental illness as a profound stigma attached to individuals (Christoph Lauber). This stigma not only affects the individual but also their family, leading to attempts to conceal it under the carpet. Moreover, mental health issues are often perceived as a reflection of one's social status, rather than being recognized as a legitimate health concern. Many individuals and families fear that seeking psychiatric help will compromise their social standing, leading to a loss of reputation and social capital. Despite the prevailing stigma, mental illness is increasingly exerting a profound impact on individuals and their overall lives within Indian societies, with its effects becoming increasingly evident. Consequently, mental illness can be observed as a burgeoning disruptor of Indian societal functioning, precipitating a deep-seated rupture in the social fabric.

#### C. Impact of mental illness on social relationship

The significance of mental health in human well-being cannot be overstated, and its importance is comparable to that of physical health. However,

mental illnesses often manifest in subtle and intangible ways, making them less discernible than physical ailments. Individuals grappling with mental health issues may experience shifts in their emotional states, internalize fears and anxieties, and engage in dialectical thought patterns that shape their behavior. Unfortunately, these changes may not be immediately apparent to others, including those closest to the individual. As social beings, individuals rely heavily on social interactions and relationships, which are essential to their well-being. Nevertheless, the emergence of mental health issues can disrupt these relationships, highlighting the complex interplay between mental health and social relationships (Debra Umberson 1, 2010).

#### D. Impact of mental illness on family relationship:

The institution of family remains a vital component of societies worldwide, including Indian society, and continues to hold relevance in contemporary times. Throughout an individual's life, the family provides unwavering support and serves as a robust agency of socialization. However, as societies evolve, individuals' lives become increasingly complex, leading to the emergence of mental stress that can impact their relationships with family members. Consequently, familial relationships may begin to fray, and in extreme cases, family members may abandon individuals struggling with mental illness (Patricia A. Thomas, 2017). Moreover, individuals overwhelmed by stress may engage in conflicts with their parents and siblings, ultimately leading to a breakdown in family relationships. This can culminate in individuals becoming accustomed to living alone, severing ties with their family.

#### E. Impact of mental illness on marriage

The institution of marriage is an ancient societal construct wherein two individuals commit to cohabiting and raising legitimate offspring. However, in contemporary times, this institution is facing a crisis, as couples struggle to cope with internal stress and mental health issues, often resulting in a breakdown of their relationship. This can lead to a situation where both partners become victims of their own emotional turmoil, ultimately culminating in the destruction of their home and family, with divorce being the inevitable outcome. Consequently, their children are often left to navigate a traumatic

experience, growing up in a broken family and feeling unprotected. Furthermore, research suggests that children from dysfunctional families are at a higher risk of developing mental health issues themselves, perpetuating a cycle of trauma and emotional distress. This underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between marital relationships, family dynamics, and mental health outcomes.

#### F. Impact of mental illness on religion:

Religion and society have long shared a profound relationship, with each influencing and complementing the other. Prominent sociologists, such as Emile Durkheim, have extensively studied this dynamic. In his work, 'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,' Durkheim argues that society establishes religion to maintain its equilibrium. German scholar Max Weber has also conducted comprehensive studies on religions worldwide. Given the intrinsic link between religion and society, individuals, as members of society, often rely heavily on religion, particularly when struggling to openly discuss their mental stress with those around them. Unfortunately, in their quest for solace, some individuals who are already vulnerable due to their own mental health struggles may fall prey to fake religious saints, and charlatans. These unscrupulous individuals exploit the emotional vulnerability of others, extracting financial gains while neglecting to provide genuine guidance.

#### G. Mental illness a global concern:

Mental illness has transcended its erstwhile status as a concern specific to particular societies, emerging instead as a pervasive global issue. Consequently, mental illness is exerting a profound impact on societies worldwide, underscoring the need for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this phenomenon. "Numerous Western and developed countries are grappling with the issue of mental illness, and its impact can be studied through the lens of societal changes and structural disruptions. However, it is notable that in Western and developed nations, the discourse surrounding mental health awareness has become increasingly normalized. Individuals in these societies not only openly discuss mental health but also do so without the stigma and fear that often accompany such conversations. This

shift in societal attitudes underscores the growing recognition of mental health as a critical aspect of overall well-being.

#### H. Facts and initiatives to combat mental illness:

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in 2020, witnessed a significant surge in mental illness cases. The pandemic-induced lockdowns, job losses, financial constraints, and the loss of loved ones to COVID-19 led to widespread mental health issues. A substantial number of individuals experienced mental stress, anxiety, depression, and severe mental illnesses like bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and psychotic disorders. The alarming rise in mental health concerns culminated in a significant increase in suicides, prompting governments to acknowledge the gravity of the situation and take concrete steps to address it. More than four lakh people in 71 countries (46,982 in India) participated in the poll, which revealed that 30.4% of Indians are distressed and experiencing mental health issues, compared to 27.1% worldwide. More than half (50.7%) of respondents in India who were between the ages of 18 and 24 reported experiencing mental distress and difficulties. This percentage was 42.9 percent for those aged 25–34, 28.7 percent for people aged 35–44, and 17.6 percent for people aged 45–54. The population group over the age of 55 has a substantially lower share (Today). 25 Centers of Excellence have been approved under the National Mental Health Program's tertiary care component to boost the number of students enrolled in postgraduate programs in mental health specializations, 53 Tele MANAS Cells were established in 36 States and UTs as of November 22, 2024, and the hotline number handled over 15.95 lakh calls. The Indian government has been working steadily to create tertiary-level treatment facilities and more mental healthcare specialists in postgraduate departments of mental health specialty in order to solve the nation's mental health issues. Additionally, 19 government medical colleges and institutions have received help from the government to improve 47 postgraduate departments in mental health specializations. On October 10, 2024, World Mental Health Day, the government also released the Tele MANAS mobile application. A complete mobile platform called the Tele-MANAS Mobile Application was created to offer assistance for mental health concerns spanning

from mental diseases to general well-being (Welfare, 2024)

### III. CONCLUSION

This study highlights how mental illness is perpetuating as a root cause of disruption across various aspects of society, including societal values and social fabric. Children are increasingly falling prey to mental illness from a young age, and in the absence of proper guidance, they often resort to substance abuse, leading to a downward spiral in their lives. Mental illness is not only affecting society, but societal dynamics and complexities are also contributing to the exacerbation of mental health issues. The rigidity of traditional values and the pressure to conform to societal norms can lead to the marginalization of individuals who dare to challenge these norms. This, in turn, can have a profound impact on the mental well-being of individuals, ultimately contributing to poor mental health outcomes. Therefore, it is imperative that society fosters an environment that promotes mental well-being, where individuals feel secure, accepted, and valued. While government initiatives are crucial in addressing mental health concerns, they are insufficient on their own. As a society, we must strive to be more sensitive, empathetic, and accepting of individuals' differences. We must develop a culture that encourages openness, validates emotions, and promotes a deeper understanding of the complexities of human experience. By embracing these values and fostering a culture of acceptance, we can work towards creating a society that supports mental well-being and promotes societal equilibrium. Ultimately, this will require a collective effort, where we, as a society, recognize the importance of mental health and work together to create a more compassionate and inclusive environment.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Celeste Kidd 1, B. Y. (2015, nov). The psychology and neuroscience of curiosity. Retrieved february 18, 2025, from <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4635443/>
- [2] Renu Joshi, N. P. (2022). "Internet an Integral Part of Human Life in 21st Century: A Review". Current Journal of Applied Science and Technology .
- [3] Staff, B. M. (2023, August 10). Stress symptoms: Effects on your body and behavior. Retrieved january 22, 2025, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/>: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-symptoms/art-20050987>
- [4] Team, I. E. (2025, january 29). What Is Research Methodology? (Why It's Important and Types). Retrieved february 10, 2025, from <https://www.indeed.com/>: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/research-methodology>
- [5] Allen, K. (2023, november 21). Emile Durkheim | Theory, Legacy & Structural Functionalism. Retrieved february 18, 2025, from <https://study.com/>: <https://study.com/learn/lesson/emile-durkheim-theory-functionalism.html>
- [6] Britannica, T. E. (n.d.). social equilibrium. Retrieved february 10, 2025, from <https://www.britannica.com/>: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-change>
- [7] Christoph Lauber, W. R. (n.d.). Stigma towards people with mental illness in developing countries in Asia. Retrieved february 18, 2025, from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17464793/>
- [8] Debra Umberson 1, J. K. (2010). Social Relationships and Health: A Flashpoint for Health Policy. Retrieved february 18, 2025, from <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3150158/>
- [9] DevInsights. (n.d.). Is Modern Life Making Us More Susceptible To Stress? Retrieved february 18, 2025, from <https://www.devinsights.co.in/>: <https://www.devinsights.co.in/blogs/is-modern-life-making-us-more-susceptible-to-stress>
- [10] Margarita Alegría, A. N. (2018, september). Social Determinants of Mental Health: Where We Are and Where We Need to Go. Retrieved february 18, 2025, from <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6181118/>

- [11] Patricia A. Thomas, H. L. (2017). Family Relationships and Well-Being. The Gerontological Society Of America .
- [12] Today, I. (n.d.). Mental health in a post-Covid world: Who's still struggling in India? Retrieved february 15, 2025, from [indiatoday.in: https://www.indiatoday.in/diu/story/mental-health-wellbeing-depression-post-covid-19-india-diu-2511035-2024-03-05](https://www.indiatoday.in/diu/story/mental-health-wellbeing-depression-post-covid-19-india-diu-2511035-2024-03-05)
- [13] Welfare, M. O. (2024). Steps taken by the Government to address mental health problems in the country. Retrieved february 15, 2025, from <https://mohfw.gov.in/>: <https://mohfw.gov.in/?q=pressrelease-158#:~:text=As%20of%2022nd%20November,D ay%20%2D%20October%2010%2C%202024.>