

Mental Health on Three Continents: A Comparison of Mental Health Disorders in the Usa, India and Brazil

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Abstract : Historically, mental and substance use disorders were not a global health priority. Since the 1993 World Development Report, the importance of the contribution of mental health and substance abuse on the relative global burden associated with disease morbidity has been recognized with 300 million people worldwide suffering from depression alone. This led to an international effort to improve the mental health of populations around the world. Despite these efforts some countries remain at the top of the list of countries with the highest rate of mental illness. Important research questions were asked: Would there be commonalities regarding mental health between these countries; would there be common factors leading to the high prevalence of mental illness; and how prepared are these countries with mental health delivery? Findings from this research can aid organizations and institutions preparing mental health service providers to focus training and preparation to address specific needs revealed by the study. Methods: Researchers decided to compare three distinctly different countries at the top of the list of countries with the highest rate of mental illness, the USA, India and Brazil, situated on three different continents with different economies and lifestyles. Data were collected using archival research methodology, reviewing records and findings of international and national health and mental health studies to subtract and compare data and findings. Results: The findings indicated that India is the most depressed country in the world, followed by the USA (and China) with Brazil in Latin America with the greatest number of depressed individuals. By 2020 roughly 20% of India, a country of over one billion citizens, will suffer from some form of mental illnesses, yet there are less than 4,000 experts available. In the USA 164.8 million people were substance abusers and an estimate of 47.6 million adults, 18 or older, had any mental illness in 2018. That means that about one in five adults in the USA experiences some form of mental illness each year, but only 41% of those affected received mental health care or services in the past year. Brazil has the greatest number of depressed individuals, in Latin America. Adults living in Sao Paulo megacity has prevalence of mental disorders at greater levels than similar surveys conducted in other areas of the world with more than one million adults with serious impairment levels. Discussion: The results show that, despite the vast socioeconomic differences between the three countries, there are correlations regarding mental health prevalence and difficulty to provide adequate services including a lack of awareness of how serious mental illness is, stigma for seeking mental illness, with comorbidity a common phenomenon, and a lack of partnership between different levels of service providers, which weakens mental health service delivery. The findings also indicate that mental health training institutions have a monumental task to prepare personnel to address the future mental health needs in each of the countries compared, which will constitute the next phase of the research.

Keywords : mental health epidemiology, mental health disorder, mental health prevalence, mental health treatment

Conference Title : ICPS 2020 : International Conference on Psychological Sciences

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : August 27-28, 2020