

Cross-Cultural Psychiatry: An Analysis of Mental Health Care Accessibility and Societal Attitudes in South Asia and the USA

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Abstract : Mental health care access and stigma present global challenges, with disparities significantly influenced by economic, cultural, and societal factors. This paper focuses on the mental health care systems of South Asia and the United States, comparing how cultural norms, infrastructure, and policy affect mental health care accessibility and effectiveness in both regions. In South Asia, mental health care is hindered by a combination of underfunding, a critical shortage of professionals, and deeply ingrained cultural stigmas that deter help-seeking. Traditional beliefs often link mental disorders to supernatural causes, and women face additional barriers due to gender disparities. Despite recent policy reforms, implementation remains a challenge, particularly in rural areas. In contrast, the U.S. has a more developed healthcare infrastructure but continues to grapple with stigma, particularly within professional settings like law enforcement. Interventions such as the use of Community Health Workers (CHWs) and collaborative care models have improved access, especially among underserved populations. However, the U.S. still faces disparities in care for minority groups, where cultural competence and stigma reduction are critical for improving outcomes. The paper's comparative analysis identifies transferable strategies from the U.S. that could be adapted to South Asia's context, such as integrating mental health care into primary care and using digital interventions to bridge the treatment gap in rural areas. Additionally, South Asia's community-centered approaches offer insights that could enhance the cultural adaptability of interventions in the U.S., particularly for ethnic minorities and immigrant populations. Through a systematic review, this paper examines intervention strategies, stigma, policy support, and the cultural and social determinants of mental health in both regions. The findings emphasize the need for culturally tailored mental health interventions and policy reforms that promote access and reduce stigma. Recommendations include enhancing public awareness, integrating mental health services into primary care, expanding community-based programs, and leveraging digital health interventions. This research contributes to the global discourse on mental health by highlighting culturally sensitive approaches that can be adapted to improve mental health care access and outcomes in both South Asia and the United States.

Keywords : mental health care, stigma, cultural influences, India, United States, mental health interventions, healthcare disparities

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