

Forum:*The Third General Assembly*

Issue: *Creating A Framework to Appropriately Support Those Suffering from Mental Illness*  
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1. **Introduction**

Mental illnesses are health conditions that tend to manipulate one’s emotions, thinking, and/or behavior. There are various types of mental illnesses, or “disorders” that could take over an individual’s well-being such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and many more. The topic of mental illnesses is often frowned upon and has always been avoided. This prevents those who are suffering from such mental illnesses to be afraid to seek help or treatment as they are worried of being judged by members of their community. Individuals tend to shame others on their suffering due to certain illness, which can result in worsening their state of mind and affecting their mental health. Unfortunately, with some mental illnesses come consequences such as severe behavioral changes that could potentially lead to suicidal thoughts. This has been found to be the most prominent in teenagers as they lack the appropriate support in order to prevent such thoughts.

In some countries, mental health crises have arisen, and their root cause has been proven to be due to lack of appropriate support from their communities and governments. Many fail to receive treatment for mental illnesses as mental health services are not always accessible and available to all. For some it could also be quite costly therefore stopping them from seeking the appropriate help. An April 2016 Kaiser Family Foundation Tracking Poll found that 13% of Americans could not afford to receive mental health treatments, 12% of Americans’ insurance wouldn’t cover treatments, 10% are afraid and/or embarrassed to receive help, and 8% did not know where to receive mental health care. This goes to show that in some of the major parts of the world, people are unaware of what it feels like to be suffering from a mental illness, as well as many countries do not know how to deal with or help those who are suffering. Therefore, it is about time to shine a light on the important issue of lack of support towards those suffering from mental illnesses.

1. **Definition of Key Terms**

**Mental Illness:**

Denotation: a condition which causes serious disorder in a person's behavior or thinking.

Connotation:several people suffering from mental illnesses are facing discrimination and cultural stigma which prevents them from gaining or receiving medical help.

**Mental Health:**

Denotation: a person’s condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.

Connotation: mental health includes an individual’s cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being.

**Disorder:**

Denotation: a disruption in the systematic functioning.

Connotation: mental disorders disrupt an individuals’ way of thinking, acting, and feelings.

**Bipolar Disorder:**

Denotation: A disorder that causes severe and unusually high and low shifts in mood, energy, and activity levels as well as unusual shifts in the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. (Also known as **Manic Depression**).

Connotation: Individuals with bipolar disorder tend to experience hypomania (elevation and/or hyperactivity) and at least one depressed state.

1. **General Overview – Background information**

**General information:**

Our social, emotional, and psychological well-being comprises our mental health. The way we act, think, and feel is affected by our state of mind, and it also determines how we deal with certain situations that could often be stressful and how me make choices. It is crucial to individuals that their mental health is always stable throughout all the different stages in life, from childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood. There are various causes that could lead to an individual having a mental illness. These causes include biological factors, in which mental illnesses develop due to certain genes, or causes such as life experiences that include trauma or abuse that could lead to mental health problems. Half of mental disorders can be shown before an individual is 14 years of age. In addition, three quarters of mental illnesses begin before the age of 24. If certain mental disorders are not treated as soon as they have been diagnosed, the individual’s mental health could worsen which could cause them to become violent. Although only 3 – 5% of those diagnosed with mental disorders are violent, it is encouraged that they seek help as soon as possible before their situation gets out of control and harm is done to themselves or those around them.

**Mental Health Illnesses in Children/Teens:**

Approximately 1 in 10 children experience mental health problems, and amongst those problems are depression and anxiety. 70% of children and teens who experience mental disorders have not received the appropriate treatment at a sufficiently early age. Surveys now show that children and teens suffer from mental illnesses more now than children and teens 30 years ago, this goes to show the how prevalent the issue has become. Children and teens are known to be vulnerable, therefore they are more likely to experience traumatic events that could leave an impact on their mental health that could last a long time. Changes also tend to act as triggers. For example, moving schools, moving homes, or even the birth of a new sibling. Some children/teens may find it exciting, however for many it could cause them to become anxious which could affect their mental health.

**Mental Illnesses in Adults:**

The world’s population is ageing rapidly. Between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's older adults is estimated to almost double from about 12% to 22%. In absolute terms, this is an expected increase from 900 million to 2 billion people over the age of 60. Older people face special physical and mental health challenges which need to be recognized. Mental health has an impact on physical health and vice versa. For example, older adults with physical health conditions such as heart disease have higher rates of depression than those who are healthy. Additionally, untreated depression in an older person with heart disease can negatively affect its outcome. Older people are more likely to experience more stress, whether it may be from work or even from the community they’re living in. An excessive amount of stress can result in isolation, loneliness or psychological distress in older people, for which they may require long-term care.

1. **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

WHO (World Health Organization):

WHO supports governments in the goal of strengthening and promoting mental health. WHO has evaluated evidence for promoting mental health and is working with governments to publicize this information and to integrate effective strategies into policies and plans. In 2013, the World Health Assembly approved a "Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan for 2013-2020". The Plan is a commitment by all WHO’s Member States to take specific actions to improve mental health and to contribute to the attainment of a set of global targets. The Action Plan’s overall goal is to promote mental well-being, prevent mental disorders, provide care, enhance recovery, promote human rights and reduce the mortality, morbidity and disability for persons with mental disorders. Particular emphasis is given in the Action Plan to the protection and promotion of human rights, the strengthening and empowering of civil society and to the central place of community-based care.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness):

Thousands of trained NAMI volunteers bring peer-led programs to a wide variety of community settings, from churches to schools to NAMI Affiliates. With the unique understanding of people with lived experience, these programs and support groups provide outstanding free education, skills training and support. As part of these programs, NAMI offers educational classes that are able to deliver a better understanding of mental health to those who wish to learn more. For example, NAMI Basics is a class for parents, guardians and other family caregivers who provide care for youth (age 22 or younger) who are experiencing mental health symptoms. Another class that the organization provides is NAMI Family & Friends which is a 4-hour seminar that informs and supports people who have loved ones with a mental health condition. Participants learn about diagnoses, treatment, recovery, communication strategies, crisis preparation and NAMI resources.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness):

NIMH is the largest scientific organization dedicated to research focused on the understanding, treatment, and prevention of mental illness. It also conducts outreach to other mental health organizations to share information about ongoing research and plans and to obtain feedback for future initiatives. Additionally, NIMH partners with these organizations in efforts to foster public awareness of the most current mental health research. NIMH provides trustworthy information about mental health disorders as well as information on a range of mental health topics and the latest mental health research. They also have free brochures, booklets, and e-books to help educate the public about mental health and mental illness.

Jordan:

Jordan has been identified as a country in need of intense support for strengthening the mental health system. It was chosen as the first country to implement WHO's mental health action program from among six countries across the globe. WHO partnered with Jordan's Ministry of Health and the Jordanian Nursing Council, under the Royal Patronage and support of HRH Princess Muna Al Hussein, on a reform of the mental health system, based on evidence and best practices. The first national mental health policy and action plan was developed by a National Steering Committee representing a large number of stakeholders. In the organization of mental health services, the focus has been shifted from purely hospital care to community-based services, using the bio-psychosocial model of health that encompasses a multidisciplinary approach among different healthcare team members to address biological, psychological and social influences upon one's functioning.