

## Mental Health Is a Universal Human Right

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It is impossible to have a conversation about health without bringing up mental health. In the US, around one in five people have a mental illness or mental health problem. In Pakistan, mental illnesses account for over four percent of all illnesses, and women are significantly more likely than males to struggle with their mental health. 24 million Pakistanis are thought to need mental health care. However, there are not enough resources allocated to the assessment, evaluation and treatment of mental health disorders to satisfy the expanding needs. According to WHO data, in Pakistan with a population of more than 180 million, there are only 400 Psychiatrists for this much population and only 5 hospitals for Psychiatric patients (WHO, 2023a).

Our total health depends on having a good mental health. In particular, a person's ability to live a life of dignity, rights, and the equitable pursuit of their potential is facilitated by their social, psychosocial, political, economic, and physical environments. In spite of this, Mental health illnesses affect one in eight people globally, and they can negatively impact a person's physical health, overall wellness,

social connections, and employment opportunities. A rising percentage of teenagers and young adults are also suffering from mental health issues, 19% of adults, 46% of teenagers and 13% of children are impacted by illnesses annually. It's important to remember that individuals dealing with mental health challenges can be found in our daily lives. They could be family members, neighbors, educators, colleagues or fellows (Cosgrove & Shaughnessy, 2020).

According to a survey conducted by the APA in 2019, it was found that the majority of Americans (87%) do not consider having a health disorder as something to be ashamed of. Additionally, 86% of those polled expressed belief, in the potential for individuals with health disorders to improve their condition. Moreover, the survey revealed that a significant 81% of people stated that they would feel either somewhat comfortable befriending someone who has a mental health disorder. These positive responses suggest an accepting environment, for individuals facing health challenges, where they no longer need to feel embarrassed, ashamed or silenced (APA, 2019).

On October 10, 1992, the first World Mental Health Day was celebrated. The yearly effort to increase public awareness of mental illness and its enormous impacts on individuals' lives around the world is celebrated on 10<sup>th</sup> of October by thousands of supporters. The major objectives of World Mental Health Day are to improve public awareness of worldwide mental health issues, coordinate support for mental health, and decrease societal stigma. In order to advance knowledge, raise awareness of the issue and serve as an inspiration for initiatives that uphold the

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fundamental human right to everyone's mental health, communities and individuals can come together in support of the topic "*Mental health is a Universal Human Right*" on World Mental Health Day in 2023. Having access to mental health services is a basic human right (WHO, 2023b). Everyone is entitled to the highest level of mental health, regardless of who they are or where they reside. This encompasses the right to be safeguarded against threats to one's mental health, the right to readily available, palatable, and best quality mental health care, as well as the right to freedom, independence, and inclusion in society. It is essential to recognize that individuals, with mental health conditions should not have their human rights infringed upon or be excluded from participating in decisions regarding their well-being. Unfortunately, across the globe, there are instances of human rights violations against those with mental health conditions. They often face exclusion and discrimination, within their communities and many struggle to access the health care or are only able to obtain care that undermines their human rights (Mahdanian et al., 2023).

People are always worried about their own physical health and the health of people who are important to them. No matter what our age, gender, social standing, or race, we consider our health to be our most precious and vital possession. However, it may prevent us from completing to our responsibilities to our families, attending work or school, or participating fully in community events. According to a report by the UN Human Rights office, people with mental health problems or disorders and those who have psychosocial disabilities have excessively higher rates of a lower life expectancy and worse physical health than the general population, falling by 15 years for women and 20 years for men. Access to the full range of services they need and the quality of treatment they receive are both significantly impacted by stigma (Hussain et al, 2021).

There has been a variety of terminology used to explain the violations of human rights and its impact and relation with mental health, as mentioned in many human right organization's reports of physical and sexual abuse, stigmatization and discrimination, lack of access to resources for housing, work, and health care, the absence of personal autonomy in financial and marital affairs, and other violations of rights, including global emergency and unresolved global crisis (Javed & Amering, 2016). These are three components to the connection among human rights and mental health. First, violations of human rights, such as torture and eviction, hurt people's mental health. Second, rights of human may be affected by laws, regulations, and practices pertaining to mental health, such as forced treatment practices. Not least among benefits is that advancing human rights is good for mental health. These benefits address the close connection between physical and mental well-being in addition to mental health. Therefore, it is necessary to advance human rights in mental health care due to moral, legal, and clinical requirements (Porsdam et al, 2016).

### Contribution of Authors

Bushra Akram: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

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