

The Shadow of Superstition: Addressing the Cultural Barriers and Mental Health Stigma in Rural India

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Abstract:

People in human society have a lot of beliefs and superstitions. In India people often think that mental health problems are because of spiritual or supernatural things. They think that things like Nazar, which's the evil eye or evil spirit possession or their ancestors being unhappy are the reasons for mental health problems. Therefore, people often go to faith healers for instant help. Research shows that approximately 69% of patients in rural areas first seek assistance from faith healers. Some studies say that 39.4% of people in rural areas think that ghosts or devils cause mental illness. This makes it hard for people to get the treatment. This paper examines how these cultural constructs create significant barriers to early intervention and psychiatric care. This creates "stigma-based trauma", the fear of being called "mad" and worrying about "what people will think" after these situations. It explores the "trauma of traditional healing," where harmful rituals can intensify existing psychological barriers to seeking help. People go to healers because there are not many doctors in rural areas, and healers understand the people's cultural beliefs. Sometimes, people are cheated by these traditional healers. The reliance on traditional healers is driven by the lack of local psychiatric resources and a shared cultural "explanatory model" that rural families find more accessible. Due to these malpractices, people face swindlers. This research is based on a qualitative review of existing social work interventions in rural settings, focusing on the intersection of cultural competence and evidence-based practice. It suggests a plan that involves community leaders and traditional healers to raise awareness about health so that people's cultural beliefs do not hurt them. The Shadow of Superstition like health stigma is a big problem in rural India that needs to be addressed. Mental health stigma, in India is a problem that needs to be solved. The Shadow of Superstition is a problem that affects health in rural India and it needs to be addressed.

Keyword:

Mental Health, Superstition, Rural India, Cultural beliefs.