



Indian Adults' Perceptions of Mental Health Practitioners

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ABSTRACT

Background: The pluralistic nature of India's mental healthcare, including psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses and social workers, traditional and religious healers, and alternative medicine practitioners, has been a point of interest for research. The existence of such pluralism makes it essential to understand the extent to which Indian adults are aware of these varied practitioners and how they are perceived.

Aims: (i) Indian adults' knowledge of services offered by mental health practitioners, (ii) their perception of need and efficiency of mental health practitioners and services, and (iii) factors influencing their perceptions and attitudes towards mental health practitioners and services.

Method: A mixed-method convergent parallel design giving equal weightage to quantitative data, collected via online surveys, and qualitative data, collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The quantitative sample consisted of 392 participants and qualitative sample consisted of 10 participants between the ages of 18 to 59 years. **Results:** Results indicated that popularly known mental healthcare professions and services are those of psychologists and psychiatrists, of which the former is grouped under the term "therapist" without distinction between clinical and counselling psychologists. Responses indicated that stigma and overall lack in awareness of mental health leads to underutilisation of services despite an admitted need. Psychologists and psychiatrists are considered more effective, and respectively preferred more, than traditional-religious healers

and alternative medicine practitioners, primarily due to the availability of popular and more visibly available scientific evidence. These findings relate primarily to the urban population and thus offer various divergences from previous literature that has focused mostly on rural populations.

Key words: Indian mental healthcare, pluralistic mental healthcare, mental health practitioners

BIOGRAPHY

Manasi is currently a final semester postgraduate student of MSc Counselling Psychology at CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Bangalore. She is a therapist in training who has experience in providing pro bono services to clients with concerns of self-esteem, interpersonal difficulties, relational and sexual abuse and trauma, and substance abuse. Her research efforts are directed towards mapping the landscape of mental healthcare as a profession and how it is understood and received in India.

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