

Mental Health and Hygiene: Issues and Challenges

Mrs. Pramila Majhi,

Assistant professor in Education, Vivekananda Mahavidyalaya, Haripal, Hooghly -

Burdwan University West Bengal

pramila.adwitiya11@gmail.com

Abstract

People battle issues related to their mental health every day. Innovative strategies to improve access to mental health plans call for thoughtful consideration. This article reinstates and examines the theoretical underpinnings of mental hygiene. Early in the 20th century, the idea of mental hygiene was first established with the intention of preventing as well as treating mental disease and less severe mental problems. Shortly after, the campaign lost its momentum, and the idea has mostly been forgotten ever since. Like other hygienic procedures, mental hygiene is a kind of inhibitory maintenance. Mental training exercises can promote beneficial cognitive processes by making use of the brain's plasticity. The article provides a succinct review of several daily mental hygiene habits that can promote wellbeing and help fend off mental health problems. These mental exercises may help to lessen common human inclinations to ruminate and daydream unconsciously, which, in excess, are linked to increased activity in the default mode network, high sensitivity to the pathophysiology of mental illness, and obstructions to human flourishing. The article advocates making mental hygiene a universally recommended practice.

Keywords: *Mental health, Hygiene, Behaviour, Health*

1. Introduction

In order to prevent and treat mental disease and other less severe mental disorders, the National Council for Mental Hygiene (NCMH) was founded in 1922 (NCMH, 1930)⁶. It was regarded as a significant effort attempting to address the mental illness problem in the neighborhood's society. Despite the support of various psychologists, World War II (WWII) transformed how mental illnesses were perceived. The well-being of healthy people was presented as being threatened by mental illness and as being harmful to society. Throughout the conflict, it has been suggested that entire nations may experience symptoms of mental

illness, making them frightening and deadly (Toms, 2010)¹². The pressure on mental health ceased after the war. Decades later, the assessment and treatment of mental illness became indifferent, with its motivation stemming from new research into mental disorders (Toms, 2010)¹³ and the deinstitutionalization movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Rodrigues et al., 2016)¹¹. Although the idea of mental health is not new, there hasn't been too much focus on its definition, particularly since World War II. Unbelievably, one in five Canadians may encounter a mental disease at some point in their lives, the most prevalent of which are depression and anxiety disorders (Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), 2017)³. A report from 2012 titled "Changing Directions, Changing Lives" makes specific recommendations for how different stakeholders can carry out structural changes in relation to the many different factors (such as health determinants, [de]stigmatization, and accessibility to mental health care) that promote mental health. This report reflects the was outlined by the original mental hygiene movement established by Adolph Meyer in the 20th century with the aim of fostering healthy ways of living, this movement s attempts to improve socioeconomic factors that influence and assist mental illness (March and Oppenheimer, 2014)⁵.

1.1 Concepts of Mental Health and Hygiene

The term "health" is widely used to define the social, physical, spiritual, and mental wellbeing of an individual. As a result, the broad idea of health includes mental health as one of its components. The ideal level of the person's behavioural and emotional adjustment is what it is concerned with. It is a condition in which a person's desires, needs, aspirations, and attitudes towards the environment are in harmony and balance.

Mental cleanliness and mental wellness go hand in hand. The term "hygiene" refers to the practise of preserving order and cleanliness in one's personal space as well as one's living and working environments in order to remain healthy.

1.2 Concept of Mental Hygiene

The science of hygiene can be summed up as "conditions or behaviours (such as cleanliness) conducive to health" or "a science of the formation and management of health" (Hygiene, 2018)⁴. Public health officials and groups have historically and presently encouraged people

to adopt particular daily behaviours by promoting various forms of cleanliness. As part of good sleep hygiene, it is recommended that adults get 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night and abstain from coffee, alcohol, and smoking an hour or two before bed. In order to promote cardiovascular hygiene, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017)¹⁶ suggests 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Recommendations for hand cleanliness have also proved crucial in lowering communicable infections (WHO, 2009)¹⁵. There is not currently a recommendation that is comparable for mental health. Mental health is essential to our wellbeing, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA, 2016)². Without it, human cannot be genuinely healthy. It involves our feelings, thoughts, behaviours, and interactions with the outside world. Given this fact, there is little information available to the general public on how to nurture good cognitive patterns and steer clear of unhealthy thought patterns. The majority of suggestions made to support a person's mental health focus on PA, decent sleep habits, a balanced diet, and preserving strong social ties. Although the significance of these suggestions should not be understated, little attention is made to the abundance of evidence suggesting that people may train their brains to develop healthy cognitive habits that promote mental wellbeing (Ramirez-Barrantes et al., 2019)¹⁰.

2. Review of Literature

Novella, E. J., and Campos, R. (2017)⁸ article examines based on an analysis of the ideological appropriation, discourses, and practical impact of mental hygiene throughout Spanish psychiatry during the early years of the Francoist regime, this thesis explores the decrease of the mental hygiene notion and its substitution by the new concept of mental health advanced by the World Health Organization and other international groups starting in the middle of the 20th century. From the 1960s onwards, the previous strategy—which mainly concentrated on the prevention of insanity within the framework of a number of interventionist social defensive system policies—became a more ambitious and expansive project that sought to improve people's psychosocial performance within the context of increasingly socialised health-related networks and narratives and care.

Rosenfield, S., and Mouzon, D. (2013)¹² stated that different types of mental health issues affect men and women in different ways. While women are more prone to experiencing internalising disorders like melancholy and anxiety, men are more likely to engage in

externalising illnesses like substance abuse and antisocial behaviour that are harmful to others. The gender gap for psychiatric issues is smaller among African Americans because of their better mental health. These inequalities also vary by society and ethnic status. What causes these variations? The study emphasises gender notions and gender practises. According to research on gender and mental health, major risk factors for internalising and externalising issues include the stressors women and men have been exposed to, the coping mechanisms they use, the social relationships they engage in, and the personal resources and vulnerabilities they develop. These risk factors include conceptions of masculinity and femininity. This chapter looks into various theories of gender differences in general, as well as by race and class.

Backovic, D. (2010)¹ stated that the focus of mental hygiene has changed as a result of this research to focus on improving mental health and preventing mental diseases. The current and turbulent historical elements have influenced the advancement of mental health treatment, despite facing new obstacles and having far better scientific information, experience, and potential. Since mental health problems not only cause emotional pain, but also make a person's quality of life worse, push them away, and make them a target for discrimination, they are important for the health of a society and its people. They also pose a significant financial burden on society because they frequently have low productivity and necessitate extensive therapy. It is necessary to promote population-wide prevention and enhancement of mental health within the context of national policies, laws, and funding in order to lessen the impact of mental diseases.

Prince, M., et. al. (2007)⁹ concluded that neuropsychiatric conditions have been linked to around 14% of the worldwide burden of disease, primarily as a result of the continuously incapacitating nature of psychoses, alcoholism, and other forms of mental illness. These figures have highlighted the significance of mental illnesses for overall public health. They may have cemented the exclusion of mental health from mainstream initiatives to advance health and fight poverty, nevertheless, because they emphasise the distinct contributions of both mental and physical problems to death and disability. Mental illnesses raise the chance of contracting both infectious and non-communicable diseases, as well as purposeful and unintentional harm. Mental health knowledge must be included in all areas of health and

health-system planning, social policy, and the delivery of primary and secondary general health care.

3. Objectives:

Following are the objectives of the study.

1. To analyse the behaviour that effect the person's mental health and hygiene.
2. To study the issues related to human mental health and hygiene.
3. To understand the challenges that are influencing mental health and hygiene.

4. Material and Method:

4.1 Study design:

The focus of the research is on human mental health and hygiene. The study's aim is to find out how human behaviour affects mental health and hygiene. Secondary Source of data used for the analysis include various research journals, articles, reports of various educational commissions, and online resources, etc. The current investigation is conducted using the following design.

4.2 Data collection:

Secondary data refers to information that has previously been gathered by another party and is now available for use by the researcher. These data are already in the public domain. The secondary data sources relevant to the study include information that already exists and is accessible to the public, regardless of whether or not it has been published. Secondary source of data collection is used for the research and analysis. Secondary data for study includes information collected by organizational records World Health Organization, government department's data of National Mental Health Policy of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of India, National Mental Health Survey of India. Blogs, and studies related to sustain good mental health and hygiene and data related to the research purposes is also included.

4.3 Data analysis:

This research is based on secondary data collection sources. Descriptive analysis is used to perform the data analysis. The present research depends upon content analysis, which is based on the collected information from secondary sources. The purpose of the study is to find out the issues and challenges related to mental health and hygiene.

5. Result and Discussion

5.1 Behaviour that maintain good health

Modern life has a wealth of comfortable amenities thanks to scientific and technological advancements. Dependence on these devices, on the other hand, can lead to an unhealthy, sedentary way of life. People should take specific precautions and adopt behaviours that advance and maintain good health in order to mitigate the hazards associated with such a lifestyle. Ayurveda, an Indian medical system, focuses on four lifestyle factors that can promote our overall health. Right recreation (Vihara), right food (Ahara), right thinking (Vichara) and right routine (Achara) are some of them. A healthy and happy existence is ensured by adhering to specific practises. Let's look more closely at each of these elements.

- **Routine (Achara):**

Three categories of activities where the person engages in a makeup routine. These people, known as Ritucharya, consume food and engage in seasonal activities. It includes consuming food and engaging in seasonal activities. People must eat and behave in accordance with the seasonal traits. Therefore, in the summer, they should eat light meals with little to no oil and lots of fluids, such as curd, rice curry, fruit juice, and beans. Sweet and salty foods can be consumed in greater quantities during the winter and autumn seasons. Examples include vegetable soup, milk products, ghee, rice, and oily foods. Light meals with little to no oil should be consumed in the spring, like dishes with gram and rice. Foods having an astringent, acidic, salty, or sweet flavour are consumed during the rainy season. As per the time of day and night, eating and engaging in activities are referred to as day routine (Dincharya) and night routine (Ratricharya). One should get up early in the morning before daybreak. One should always drink water after waking up. It guarantees easy bodily waste outflow and is an effective treatment for constipation. Before getting into the bath, the body

should be massaged after faeces have been removed and teeth have been cleaned. As a result, there should be a designated time during the 24-hour cycle for each activity.

- **Thinking (Vichara):**

Sound and positive mental health can only be maintained with the correct way of thinking. Self-confidence, an accommodating intelligence, the capacity to take criticism, awareness of other people's emotional needs, and self-control are all traits of a mentally healthy and fit individual. Such people are not controlled by lust or greed, nor are they by worry, fear, rage, attachment, jealousy, or anger. On the social front, a person who thinks positively makes respectable friends and gains the respect of others.

- **Food (Ahara):**

The most crucial component of life is food. Vegetarian cuisine is healthier and more energising for the body than non-vegetarian meals. One needs to consume fresh produce with adequate fibre content for improved health. Heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, stomach ulcers, obesity, and even cancer are all brought on by junk, spicy, greasy, and processed foods. Honey, green vegetables, beans, fresh fruits, milk, curd, and butter oil should all be included in our daily diets as they all give enough amounts of vitamins, minerals, iron, antioxidants, and fibre. Additionally, people should consume a balanced amount of each food category each day. Besides, they ought to stick to set mealtimes. Healthy eating habits include chewing your meal thoroughly and controlling your portions.

- **Recreation (Vihara):**

The most crucial elements of recreation are working out and taking a morning stroll. It strengthens and lightens the physique. It improves the body's capacity for work, resistance, and immunity. Through perspiration, the body excretes toxins during exercise. The person's appetite is increased by it. Daily exercise also controls health issues, including diabetes and heart disease. Exercise protects impotence and slows down the ageing process. The increased oxygen intake and carbon dioxide output aid in the body's clearance of dead cells, which helps to purify blood. Music-related leisure pursuits are beneficial for sustaining health.

5.2 Issues of mental health and hygiene

We must maintain good mental health in order to function as humans. But with time, people form certain habits and behaviours that can contribute to mental illness. These behaviours describe conditions ranging from little irritation to severe sadness and anxiety. The following are the most prominent indicators of poor mental health:

- Unorganized and haphazard daily routine
- Short-tempered and impatient behaviour
- Aggressive behaviour and anger
- Restlessness
- Indigestion and an increased or decreased appetite
- Irregular sleeping patterns caused by narcolepsy, insomnia, or other sleep disturbances (excess sleep).
- A lack of interpersonal connections
- Worry and anxiety
- A negative outlook on oneself and others
- Withdrawing from connections
- Aberrant and atypical physiological states (e.g., heart palpitation, pulse rate and blood pressure)
- Improper use of drugs (e.g., hallucinogens, alcohol and tranquillizers)
- Smoking cigarettes and using tobacco in other forms.

The threats listed above could endanger mental health. It is much more likely that someone will acquire different types of mental problems if they engage in such as behaviours regularly or stay in a certain condition for an extended period of time. The National Mental Health Policy's (2014)¹⁴ vision is to provide all people with access to high-quality, reasonably priced health and social care throughout their lives, within a framework based on human rights, in order to promote mental health, prevent mental disorder, enable recovery from mental illness, promote de-stigmatization and desegregation, and make sure socioeconomic inclusion of persons suffering from mental illnesses.

5.3 Challenges of mental health and hygiene

Among the prevalent mental health conditions included in this article are depression and anxiety disorders such as panic disorder, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and post-traumatic stress disorder. Other common mental health problems include fears of certain things or situations (like spiders) or feelings of shame in front of other people. Because they together impact more individuals than other mental health challenges, these issues are referred to as "common" mental health issues. Some individuals may struggle with many mental health issues (such as anxiety and depression).

- **Depression**

Feeling down and losing enjoyment in once-pleasurable activities are the key symptoms. These signs may be accompanied by others, such as being frequently tearful, irritated, or exhausted, experiencing changes in appetite, and experiencing issues with sleep, concentration, or memory. People that are depressed frequently have a lot of negative thoughts, feel guilty and worthless, and frequently criticise themselves.

- **Generalised anxiety disorder**

The main symptoms include having a wide range of worries that are excessive and out of proportion to a particular situation, as well as difficulty managing fears. In addition to feeling irritable, a person having generalised anxiety disorder can experience physical symptoms such as restlessness, fatigue, and stiff muscles. Additionally, they can have a hard time focusing or sleeping.

- **Panic disorder**

The main signs and symptoms are having unprovoked, frequent panic attacks and anxiety that they may happen again. One indication of a panic attack is an accelerated heart rate. A panic attack might happen for no obvious reason or it can happen as a result of a particular situation (something the person fears or wishes to prevent). Panic attack sufferers usually change their behaviour in response to the attack, which can lead to phobias such as agoraphobia (fear of being in such situations or places that were difficult to escape from).

- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder**

Obsessive-compulsive disorder may affect people who are troubled by recurrent, unwelcome, and uncontrollable thoughts or who feel compelled to repeat particular actions. The obsessive-compulsive disorder's thoughts and actions might interfere with daily life, but treatment can help people manage their symptoms. The fear of dirt and germs, the concern that something is unsafe (like electrical equipment), the desire to just have things in a certain order, and the thoughts and concerns of hurting someone else are all examples of common obsessions. Common compulsions include excessive cleaning as well as washing, frequent object inspection, conserving items that others might discard, and repeating words, acts, or numbers in a certain sequence.

- **Post-traumatic stress disorder**

The physical and psychological symptoms might occasionally occur after specific scary or upsetting experiences. The recurrence of upsetting memories of the event is one of the most common signs of PTSD. The experience of revisiting the incident through flashbacks or dreams is another possibility. Physical responses, including shaking and perspiration are also possible.

5.4 Suggestions:

According to data from the National Mental Health Survey, governmental decision-makers, health care professionals, opinion leaders, and the general public must pay immediate attention to the massive burden of mental, behavioural, and drug use problems in India. Additionally, the platforms already in place in workplaces and educational institutions should be enhanced to integrate a mental health agenda (NMHS, 2015-16)⁷. When applied to the field of the mind, the health and hygiene idea is the practise of creating, fostering, and preserving the social, emotional, and behavioural competencies required to maintain optimal mental health. This can be accomplished by employing several fundamental tactics in daily living on the mental and behavioural levels. These are listed below:

- **Reality Contact:**

An honest assessment of one's own reactions, feelings, and talents is crucial for maintaining good and sound mental health. You might be able to steer clear of a number of such as disappointments and annoyances in daily life if you are in touch with reality.

- **Impulse Management:**

The behaviour and impulses of a person having a healthy adjustment would be under good control. So, if you want to keep your mental health in good shape, you must have full control over your impulse control.

- **Self-esteem:**

The term "self-concept" refers to one's awareness of oneself. It encompasses all of the "I" or "me" expressions of emotions, convictions, and ideals. An individual's self is the result of what they know about themselves. The evaluative aspect of oneself is one's self-esteem. Evaluating oneself personally might be favourable or negative. Mental wellness depends on having a good self-concept or feeling like oneself.

- **Positive Thoughts:**

Whether people steer our thoughts in a positive or negative direction determines the level of mental wellness. Negative emotions like resentment, hatred, envy, fear, and despair are brought on by negative thoughts. Such negative emotions or feelings are detrimental to our mental wellness. They are also harmful to the endocrine system. People must therefore cultivate the power of positive thinking, which causes us to feel pleasant emotions such optimism, happiness, joy, happiness, hope, love, and compassion, in order to sustain our mental health. These feelings increase our ability to deal with various issues in life.

6. Conclusion:

Mental health is recognized as one of the greatest public health challenges of the twenty-first century. It is a complicated, multifaceted challenge that takes into account a number of variables, some of which have been distinctly identified and others of which are still being defined. The practise of maintaining order and cleanliness in one's personal space as well as in one's living and working environments is known as maintaining good mental hygiene. This

idea can be expanded to include the art of creating, preserving, and fostering the social, emotional, and behavioural competencies required to preserve excellent mental health.

The definition of mental ill-health is when a person lacks the characteristics of good mental health. The term "mental disease" refers to a broad category that encompasses all behavioural illnesses brought on by flawed emotions, reasoning, perception, and attitude. People frequently fail to plan activities according to the amount of time people have. Pressure, anxiety, and frustration are greatly increased by this. Making an activity schedule is a step in creating a structured routine. Diverse strategies must be used to tackle this problem. Consideration and greater thought should be given to encouraging a grassroots movement in which people consciously train their minds every day to promote good cognitive habits. In order to boost the public mental health plan, it may be beneficial to educate the public about good mental hygiene.

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