EDITORIAL

Unfolding Mental Health Issues While Walking through the Crisis

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The world has witnessed severe humanitarian crises over the past decade, although the world was never free from this. The humanitarian crisis at the beginning of the past decade was more focal and confined to regions like Syria,[1,2] Afghanistan,[3,4] the Rohingya refugee crisis in India-Bangladesh,[5] the financial and political crisis in Venezuela[6] and Sri Lanka.[7] Along with this, major global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic[8] and the Ukraine-Russia war[9,10] are going on uninterruptedly, adversely affecting people's lives across multiple countries. Such events are mostly unanticipated and sudden.

During the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, people were unaware of the threat due to COVID-19, sudden unanticipated declaration of emergency, global lockdown, lack of treatment, exhaustion of infrastructures, high contagious nature of the virus and reports of people dying in large mass in different corners of the world, evoked significant psychological distress in people.[11-14] People, irrespective of their socio-economic strata and vulnerabilities, experienced distress. The mental healthcare needs suddenly increased among the general population.[11] Lockdown resulted in disruption of transport, and closure of small healthcare facilities and routine healthcare services, as a result of which majority of people could not avail the essential mental health services, resulting in a big chaos. However, the governments managed well enough to deal with the emerging issues related to mental health and other healthcare services. A notable change during this pandemic is the increased utilization of online healthcare services.[15]

Though the COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest global challenge due to its extent and severity, several other significant local and regional issues affect mental health adversely. Afghanistan humanitarian crisis is one such example that had a significant mental health impact. The conflict between Taliban rulers and America resulted in a long war and bloodshed.[16,17] As per the World Health Organization report, about 22% of individuals who witnessed war and other conflicts during the past decade will develop one or other form of mental illness.[18] Furthermore, the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia is expected to increase mental health issues in both the countries and countries.[9,19] Mass displacement, war trauma, loss of close ones, loss of job, abuse, human

trafficking, uncertainty about the future, abuse and violence during the ongoing war are expected to affect war victims' mental health adversely.

Similarly, several mental health issues were reported among the Rohingya refugees.[20] Refugee camps had outbreaks of several infectious diseases. Adverse life situations, survival challenges, uncertainty about the future, abuse and exploitation of human rights increase the vulnerability to mental illnesses. Such impact was also noticed in Iraq war veterans and the general population due to the long-run conflict with America.[17] The financial crisis in Venezuela and Sri Lanka[6,7] resulted in a rapid hike in the price of essential goods, safety & security concerns, poverty, and disruption of social cohesiveness and integrity, which are known to impair the community's mental health.

During a severe humanitarian crisis, almost all individuals affected during the crisis experience some amount of psychological distress.[18] However, the severity of psychological distress varies from individual to individual. Therefore, the amount of psychological distress may be minimized by enhancing psychosocial support, improvising the coping skills of the affected individuals, early detection of psychological distress and timely management.

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