



Gender and mental health in Bihar and India: Developing tools for effective measurement

Background:

Measuring mental health

India's National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) aims to promote mental well-being, prevent mental disorders, and treat and rehabilitate people who suffer from mental illness. The NMHP's 2014 policy statement, published by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, recognizes the need for research to monitor "the mental health of populations both to assess the changing patterns of burden over time as well as to evaluate the impact of mental health programs" (GoI, 2014). Mobile phone surveys hold promise for improving monitoring of mental health in India.

Gender discrimination and mental health

The 2014 NMHP's policy statement also calls upon researchers to develop a "deeper understanding" of the bio-psycho-social determinants of mental health and mental illness (GoI, 2014). Gender discrimination may be an important social determinant of women's poor mental health and of any disparities in mental health outcomes between men and women.

Identifying gender discrimination as a reason for poor mental health has policy relevance for other areas of health as well. For example, poor women's mental health may be an important constraint on child health. Identifying links between women's status and women's mental health will provide another important reason for policy makers to focus on mothers when trying to formulate better child health policies.

Aims for the workshop:

1. We hope that the research on the measurement of mental health will convince policy makers at the state level to implement regular monitoring of the mental health status of their populations and evaluate the impact of programs and policies. We also hope to convince policy makers at the central level to support these efforts.
2. The National Mental Health Policy recognizes that stigma is an important problem in identifying and treating people with mental illness. Through dialogue with other researchers, practitioners, legal experts, and policy makers, we hope to highlight the nature of mental health problems, and the best way forward in de-mystifying mental illness, and reducing stigma against people who suffer from mental illness.

Schedule:

India: Friday, July 10th, 9am to 12pm

US: Thursday, July 9th, 8:30pm to 11:30pm Pacific Standard Time

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome by Diane Coffey & Amit Thorat
9:15 – 9:30	Presentation 1: Diane Coffey Measuring mental health through phone surveys
9:30 – 9:45	Presentation 2: Aashish Gupta Caste, religion, & mental health
9:45 – 10:00	Presentation 3: Payal Hathi Gender discrimination and mental health
10:00 – 10:30	Q&A for Presentations 1, 2, and 3
10:30 – 10:45	Presentation 4: Amit Thorat Discrimination and psychological distress in higher education
10:45 – 11:00	Presentation 5: Bhargavi Davar Gender and mental health policy
11:00 – 11:15	Presentation 6: Amita Dhanda National Mental Health Act
11:15 – 11:45	Q&A for Presentations 4, 5, 6
11:45 – 12:00	Wrap-up and Closing

Presenter bios:

Presentation 1 (Diane Coffey): Diane is a demographer who studies social influences on health in India. Her research documents the intergenerational transmission of poor population health resulting from India's exceptionally poor maternal nutrition. With the Social Attitudes Research, India (SARI) team, she has developed mobile phone survey methods for measuring discrimination against women and Dalits. She holds a BA from Villanova University, and MPA and a PhD from Princeton University. She is currently an Assistant Professor in Sociology & Population Research at UT Austin and a co-executive director of r.i.c.e., a research institute for compassionate economics.

Presentation 2 (Aashish Gupta): Aashish is a demographer. He is a PhD candidate in demography and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. His research interests are in demographic methods, social inequalities, and environmental determinants of health.

Presentation 3 (Payal Hathi): Payal is a Ph.D. student in Demography and Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, and a Research Fellow at r.i.c.e. Her research interests center on health and well-being in India, with a focus on social inequality, gender, sanitation, and the environment.

Presentation 4 (Amit Thorat): Amit is an Assistant Professor at the Center for the Study of Regional Development at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Prior to this he worked as an Associate Fellow at the National Council for Applied Economics Research (NCAER), New Delhi. He obtained his PhD Degree in Economics from the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning (CESP), JNU. His research has been on issues of income, educational and health inequalities in general and across social, ethnic and religious groups in particular, in the context of India. At present he is working on understanding the continuing practice of untouchability in India and its implications on social behavior. His earlier work includes examining gains for small and marginal farmers from high value fruits and vegetable production as well as from cooperative farming.

Presentation 5 (Bhargavi Davar): Bhargavi V Davar, PhD, is a childhood survivor of the Indian mental asylums. She identifies as a person with a psychosocial disability having endured long-term trauma from those experiences. She completed her PhD on the ethical and epistemological foundations of the mental and behavioural sciences and the possibility of human freedom within those disciplines. Her work has been on gender, culture and disability studies, and the basis for the modern mental health policy frames in Asia. She has several published works, including (co-author), *Psychoanalysis as a Human Science* (Sage 1995), *Mental health of Indian women* (Sage 1999), (ed.) *Mental health from a gender perspective* (Sage 2001), *Gendering mental health: Knowledges, identities, institutions* (OUP 2015). She is Director of the Bapu Trust for Research on Mind & Discourse, Pune; and Convenor for an Asia Pacific advocacy platform called 'Transforming Communities for Inclusion, Asia' (TCI Asia Pacific). Her work through these organisations is to advocate for the full realization of all human rights for persons with psychosocial disabilities, especially the right to live in the community.

Presentation 6 (Amita Dhanda): Amita Dhanda is Professor of Law at National Academy of Legal Studies and Research, Hyderabad, since the last 20 years. She also heads the Centre for Disability Studies at the University. An international expert in the field of disability human rights Dr Dhanda has not just argued for the human rights claims of persons with disabilities but also demonstrated how disability human rights would strengthen the human rights of all. Her book *Legal Order and Mental Disorder* is a pioneering work in the field and her writings on legal capacity of persons with disabilities as well as evolving capacity of the child are widely referred to.