Committee: Social and Human Rights (SF-1)
Issue: Discussing the ways to improve the people's mental health affected by the pandemic.
Student Officers: Zeynep Hacıömeroğlu,

Introduction

Mental health is a state of well-being in which people can achieve their maximum potential for growth and development, cope with the everyday hassles, and deal with emotions such as stress and pressure and make a contribution towards society as a productive member. The well-being of mental health is dependent on manifold factors including environmental factors, social interactions and family life. Lest any inconvenience occurs in any of these factors, the mental health of an individual becomes extremely susceptible to being deteriorated and suffering from a mental illness such as but not limited to depression, bipolar disorder or anxiety.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 and its terrifically fast spread across the globe compelled the governments to implement a myriad of restrictions such as but not limited to curfews, mandatory quarantines, and social distance. Even though such precautions shouldered a prodigious role in mitigating the spread of the virus, being subjected to them did not necessarily serve to the social life and mental health of the majority. With face-to-face meetings being held on online platforms, school lessons being taught in front of a computer and social gatherings almost being vanished; the lifestyle and typical daily routines of the population changed drastically, maybe never to be the same. Thus, as the inevitable harvest for such radical changes and long periods of detachment from social and daily life paved the way for a dramatic increase in mental health problems including depression, stress and anxiety. In spite of the regional and international efforts dedicated, the issue remains unabated and requires urgent action. Otherwise, our future will be confined to nations with less productivity capacity, work force and potential to add value for the upcoming generations.

Background information

The coronavirus pandemic has turned the lives of many families upside down. It has also increased the rate of new mental health symptoms around the population. During may 2020 the Household Pulse survey, the rate of Americans that have anxiety and depression symptoms has increased from 30% to 43%. As the pandemic continued to surge on these numbers kept increasing and as now reached a plateau due the slow and steady reopening of the world, but the created mental health problems still persist.

Key Terms

Mental Health: Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Depression: (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Fortunately, it is also treatable. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease your ability to function at work and at home.

Anxiety: Anxiety is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. The first day of school, going to a job interview, or giving a speech may cause most people to feel fearful and nervous. But if your feelings of anxiety are extreme, last for longer than six months, and are interfering with your life, you may have an anxiety disorder.

Quarantine: a specific period of time in which a person or animal that has a disease, or may have one, must stay or be kept away from others in order to prevent the spread of the disease

Social Distancing: Social and physical distancing measures aim to slow the spread of disease by stopping chains of transmission of COVID-19 and preventing new ones from appearing.These measures secure physical distance between people (of at least one metre), and reduce contact with contaminated surfaces, while encouraging and sustaining virtual social connection within families and communities.

Isolation: these rules are for a sick person who has the Coronavirus. Stay home. Do not go outside. Stay in a separate room in your house, away from others. It is possible to use your own bathroom. Wear a mask when you come out of your room. Clean and disinfect everything you touch.

NIH: National Institutes of Health. (Where Dr. Anthony Fauci works!) A department in the United States government that does research on why people get sick.

Vaccine: a shot that protects you from getting the flu or other illnesses.

Major Countries Involved in the Issue:

Mexico: According to the recent statistics from OECD the estimates of prevalence of anxiety and anxiety symptoms in 2019 tripled for the 2020 data. Furthermore, the prevalence of depression or depression symptoms increased by 9 times with the advent of the coronavirus.

Italy: Due to COVID-19 severe disruptions in the healthcare services in Italy were reported in 2020. 14% of community mental health centers had been closed, 25% had reduced their hours, and approximately 78% of day hospitals had been closed, approximately 75% of non-urgent contacts were conducted remotely.

Korea: Korea experienced one of the greatest jumps in anxiety and depression rates worldwide by 30 times and 35 times respectively.

Netherlands: In the Netherlands despite the drastic increase in depression rates by double during the first year of pandemic, the number of referrals to mental health care fell by 25-80%, demand for treatment dropped by 10 to 40%; billable hours decreased by 5-20%; and bed occupancy dropped by 9%.

United Kingdom: The United Kingdom is among the countries whose mental distress levels peaked in 2020. The majority of this increase was due to the number of workers who were not furloughed in long-term insecure jobs.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Most of the previous attempts regarding this issue remained regional and national. However, UN took the following actions in order to cope with mental health crisis in the world in general:

Project BRAVE: Project BRAVE (Building COVID-safe Responses And Voices for Equity) is a two-year joint programme in the Philippines, which was launched on 5 November 2021 by the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with the aim of taking concrete action to help vulnerable women, children, and teenagers with mental health and psychosocial services and protection from gender-based violence (GBV) during the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental Health Atlas: The Mental Health Atlas, published every three years,the last one being in 2020, is a compilation of information provided by the member states all over the world on mental health policies, legislation, financing, human resources, availability and usage of services and data collection systems. It is regarded as a reference for countries in the development and planning of mental health care.

Nations for Mental Health: Nations for Mental Health was devised by WHO to promote collaboration between governments, the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies (such as UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, ILO, UNDCP, UNESCO), and comparable entities such as The World Bank and NGOs, with the aim of improving the mental health and psychological well-being of the world's underserved populations in all six WHO regions of the world Nations for Mental Health. It is an initiative within the UN system for mental health in underserved populations, hence it aims to raise awareness on the effects of mental health problems and substance abuse on the psychosocial well–being of the world's underserved populations.

UN Report: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health: On 13 May 2020, the United Nations published this policy brief in which the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, specific populations of concern and feasible action propositions were discussed.

<u>Possible Solutions</u>

- Adopt a whole-society approach to promote, protect and care for mental health,
- Ensure widespread availability of emergency mental health and psychological support,
- Support recovery from COVID-19 by building mental health services for future,
- Collaborate with national governments and regional bodies to launch mental health programs, regulate necessary legislation, designate a budget for mental and psychological   health services and improve the already-existing mental health services,
- Promote cooperation with non-governmental organizations to launch campaigns and programs, raise awareness and establish institutions and services for mental health,

<u>Timeline of events</u>

1. january 2020: beginning of pandemic
2. March 2020: rise of cases and lockdown of most of the world
3. June 2020-may 2021: height of pandemic lockdown and mental health degradation
4. May 2021 onward: slowing down of pandemic and slow reopening

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