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# Role of Psychosocial Programmes in Uplifting Mental Health of Institutionalized Masses

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**Abstract:** *Safeguarding primary needs of food, clothing and shelter among institutionalized masses is not enough unless their psychological and social demands are not appropriately met. Lack of positive mental health among such masses result in disruptive behaviours and land them to more risky behaviours if their grievances are not catered well. Diagnosing and early interventions can prevent severity of problem furthermore aid in recovery. Psychosocial interventions and programmes do phenomenally work on alleviating mental health challenges and are designed to be administered on different segments of vulnerable population. Psychosocial interventions are undoubtedly a remedy to stable and sound well-being.*

**Keywords:** *Psychosocial programmes, mental health, institutionalized masses, interventions, therapies*

## I. INTRODUCTION

‘Mental health’ in its consolidated form refers to the cognitive and social emotional well-being of a person. It comprises of way in which individual think, act or behaves in their social environment. WHO also endorse the mental health concept as not just the “absence of mental disorder or illness” in fact the ability of a person to realize his/her own capabilities, cope up with normal stressors of life, productive in work and making contribution to the society in which he/she resides. Mental health of a person hold an integral part as it influence the person to maintain healthy relationships, attaining leisure interests, making routine decisions, other choices and leading a contented life. Well-being of a person is much affected by the broader existential circumstances in which they flourish other than the individual characteristics:

### A. Individual factors

These factors as suggests are the innate ones or those which individual learn in order to overcome and manage stresses in daily life. It refers to the emotional intelligence and the competence to deal with the adverse situations of life which when lacks results in ill mental health.

### B. Existential circumstances

It implies for the capacity of an individual to flourish in immediate surroundings which comprises positive engagement with the family, friends, and neighbourhood. Disparities in these conditions lead to loss of certain opportunities and necessities that are pertinent to poor mental health.

Risk to mental well-being manifests at all stages of life although there are certain societal groups which are more prone and susceptible to experience mental health hazards. These groups comprised of ones who witnessed the adversities of life; survivors of war, victims of conflict, abuse, family unrest, abandon individuals, orphans, socially excluded, impoverished and institutionalized masses.

## II. INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Family is child’s first school and a powerful determinant in shaping one’s overall development. Unparalleled love, affection, warmth, security and care provided to the child by the family is very paramount in raising a healthy child. But unlike normal children, poor, homeless parentless and other disadvantaged children are the ones forced to reside in institutions and orphanages where they are away from emotional support of biological parents and family. Institutionalization refers to the method of placing or sending a child (homeless, orphan, poor and abandoned) into an institution or place where he is cared by those other than his/her biological parents or foster parents. These institutions are run by organizations both government and private. Institutions like these are responsible for the substituted care and protection of such special groups. A negative effect of institutional rearing has been reflected and is very much documented in the researches all over the world. Limitations of resources and scarcity of proper funds to the institution make it quite difficult to meet the ends moreover institutionalized child is likely to suffer from lack of consistent love,

care and stimulation. These groups are in dearth of proper feasible environment which purely lacks in rudimentary emotional bonds of family support and care. These conditions lead to unmet and unfulfilled demands of one's basic needs and requirements and this eventually consequence in poor mental health of an individual. It is essential that beside primary needs of food, clothing and shelter their emotional need should also be taken into consideration to aid them to grow at proper pace into an emotionally stable person. Attachment theory given by Bowlby have also accentuated the family based care over institutional and moreover it has emphasized on the negative aftermaths of institutional upbringing. Loosing parental body at any stage of life is no less than a trauma in oneself. It leaves a child to taste some very bitter experiences of life situations and is prone to face multiple challenges like- child abuse, trafficking, lack of educational opportunities, child labour and malnourishment. One without parental support either find place under the care of their kins or find their way in institutions like orphanages where they are send to be cared for.

Children in institutional atmosphere are more likely to suffer from physical, social, intellectual, development and attachment disorders. In this environment they are not provided with enough nurturing and stimulation for their potential unfolding, resulting in less confident and insecure individuals. Stigma and discrimination when go all together it gives rise to negative behaviour and psychological consequences leading to victims of deprived mental health and psychological well-being. However it is not the same case with overall population. Among such vulnerable population those possessing the capacity to cope up with challenging situations in one's life i.e. the resilience factor resumes to normal functioning even after exposure to high risk experience whereas those deprived of resiliency and coping up trait are left with deteriorated mental health. In order to hinder mental health declining proper care support and protection is required which is a big challenging issue. In such scenario good adaptation and development could be promoted through resilience building psychological programme and interventions among such vulnerable and susceptible institutionalized masses.

### III. PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS AND PROGRAMME

Life's traumatic and unpleasant events have certain negative and long lasting impacts on the survivors which somewhere or the other influence their overall well-being. Interventions refer to an "act of intervening" by a person or persons, conditions which bring out desirable changes in an individual or group. These are targeted to bring out specifically positive and better changes.

Psychosocial interventions as the word applies, involves psychology i.e. person's thought, ideas, belief, behaviours and emotions whereas social aspects deals with the relationships, traditions, culture and social environment in which individual perpetuates. Hence in a consolidated form psychosocial interventions are those which attempt to bring apparent positive changes in person's overall well-being. These programmes and interventions incorporate set of skills that can be applied to overcome stresses of life. Such programme are tailor made as per according to the needs of the group or population being targeted.

This may encloses development of coping strategies and mechanism, building up trust, warm relationships with the peer group, decision making skills, self-worth and self-identity. These interventions work as support system or mechanism and the activities within the programme are customized focussing on strengthening child's life skills, ensuring social connectivity, sharing listening and responding to problems and healthy recreation.

Children placed in institutions are mainly catered with primary fundamental needs as the basic necessities to survive but their plight for psychological needs are still left unfed which eventually result in the poor mental health scenario. Psychosocial therapies and intervention aid individuals to think about themselves and other within their environment setting. This reduces the negative effect and helps them to get diverted from the cause of poor health and improves their ability to manage and function socially within the ambience around them. Researches suggests that prevention and imparting intervention services at early stage may result in considerable healing whereas delayed conditions may lead to the severity of the problem. Some of the psychosocial therapies which could be implied on vulnerable groups are discussed below:

#### A. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

This therapy is based upon how one cognize i.e. think and behaves accordingly. It helps to bring one's underlying thoughts especially negative in order to get aware as how those thought are affecting one's behaviour. Techniques involved in conducting this therapy are role playing, diary writing or journaling. This therapy works out in establishing new thinking by identifying and changing false ides and perceptions about oneself along with the world around.

#### B. Art therapies

Expressing oneself in the form of art has been a soothing experience, found to recover mental distress. These therapies provide a platform for the individual to creatively express one's inner emotions without using words. They are known for their creative way to



reconcile emotions, reduce stress, anxiety, sadness and trauma. One can use visual images and aesthetic form to express oneself via this technique.

#### C. Music therapy

listening music has been always a stress buster which aids in overcoming and managing stress. This therapy plays a paramount role in alleviating pain, reducing anxiety and promoting overall wellness. Soothing music can jazz up once mood in no time.

#### D. Play therapy

Play has always regarded as the mode to bring out pent up emotions of an individual. Therapy allows the child to explore his/her emotional world. It provides room for children to talk about their problem. Play therapy recognizes play as the communication aid of the child. Such type of technique is most suitable for the ones who have been the victims of trauma, disturbed relationships, behaviour problems and poor mental health. Therapy may be conducted either individually or in a group and involves role playing and drama which aid them to act out difficult situations and emotions moreover find alternatives and solutions to various life challenges.

#### E. Equine therapy

Equine therapy is entitled by several other names like animal therapy, horse therapy and equine assisted therapy. Basically this therapy involves interaction of humans with horses. Animals have always been man's true friend and beside horses other animals like elephants, dogs and cats too have been used for therapeutic purposes. Horses have been chosen to be used in equine therapy as their feedback to handler is quick. Besides riding the horse therapy involves certain task to be completed with the horse and later discussing about the ideas, thoughts and problem solving skills used by the client while doing the task. It helps the client to remain focussed in present rather struggling and getting anxious about the past or bitter experiences. This therapy is beneficial for the ones struggling with anxiety, dementia, behavioural issues, autism, cerebral palsy and other mental health issues.

#### F. Mindfulness therapy

This therapy has its roots from Buddhist meditation and is helpful to those who are suffering from anxiety, depression, unhappiness, mood swings and mood disorders. It mainly involves certain meditation sessions/ practices and breathing exercises. Exercises and meditation practices involved in this therapy balances neural networks and keep away the negative emotions and response hence preserving the mental soundness. Involving these exercises in daily routine pattern one can keep negativity at edge by practising whenever they feel surrounded by negative emotions and can replace them with positivity.

#### G. Solution Focussed Therapy

Solution focussed therapy as its name implies work upon finding solutions using the current resources available with the person. It work upon the strengths of the person to achieve goals rather than working on weaknesses. This therapy focuses more on present situation than past history and help to make future better. It is effective for those who have goal set in their minds to embrace change. Beneficiaries of this therapy include families, children and couples. Issues which could be resolved using this technique and therapy includes: anxiety, communication and behavioural problems, relationship difficulties, stress etc. Techniques involved in this therapy included

- 1) *Miracle questions*: one which encourages them to think over something occurred which they could not achieve ever.
- 2) *Exception questions*: which take them back to the times when a particular problem occurred to them and bring in light their strength and encourage them to use those strengths to combat problematic situations. Here therapist plays the role of a motivator and mentor.
- 3) *Scaling questions*: these questions uses to rate one's problem in terms of difficulty from 1-10 to know where problematic situation lies in the mind-set of the client and accordingly therapist can explore and work upon areas where needs are to be met.

#### H. Rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT)

This therapy is largely based upon the principle as how one feel is actually due to the way one think about something or other. It lay emphasis to change one's irrational thoughts and believe in order to reorganize emotional and cognitive functioning. This therapy deals with altering individual's attitude and making them aware about the negative thoughts which ruin their life in some or other way. During the sessions irrational fears and inhibitions are explored by the therapist and the client is aided to modify their thinking using reasonable life philosophy to combat future problems.



### *I. Eclectic Therapy*

This therapy works on using a combination and variety of therapies all together as per suited to the need of the person. This therapeutic technique is customized and employs techniques from different schools of therapy. As per the demands of the client therapist uses most effective techniques in integrated manner to heal the client as quickly and effectively as possible. Therapy works well to overcome mood disorders, behaviour problems, addiction, substance use and other sorts of psychological and emotional issues.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Hence it is well stated that interventions and programmes employing psychological and psychosocial aspects in its activities to triumph over various mental health issues do work wonders and heal such problems to a great extent. It's necessary that institutions running to shelter the vulnerable masses of society not only limit their priorities of satisfying basic needs of food, clothing and shelter but should also pay attention to their plight for psychological needs in order to fulfil demands of holistic development.

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