



Research Reports

MSMUNQ VI: SDG 3

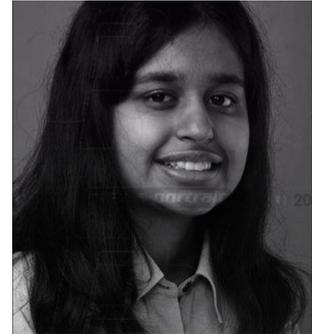


Forum: Sustainable Development Goal 3

Issue: Improving Good Health and Wellbeing in the Gulf Region with focus on Mental Health

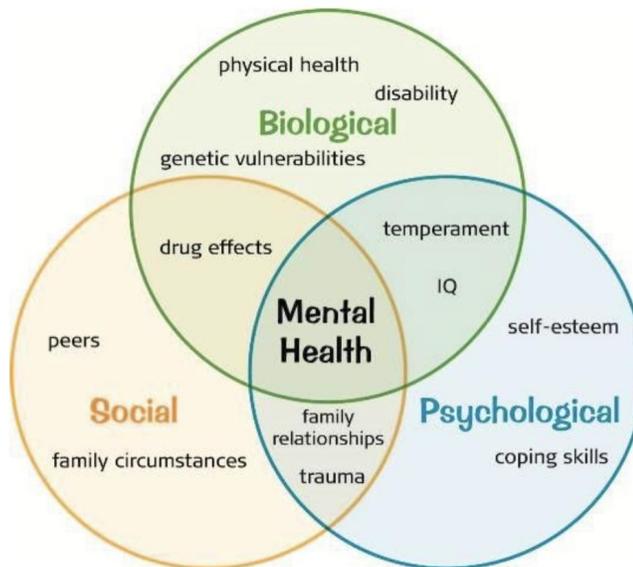
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PART 1 of the Research Report: Root Causes of the Issue

1. What social factors cause this issue? How does it do so?



Factors affecting mental health

- a. **Illegal and legal drugs** have the effect of making people feel anxious, paranoid and depressed. They may partake in causing previous mental health problems to reoccur, while also triggering schizophrenia and psychosis. Additionally, these drugs' addictivity also tends to worsen the effects on mental health. Legal drugs are such as tobacco and alcohol.



- b. **Peer pressure and poor family relationships** also play a massive role on one's mental health, by reducing self-confidence and sense of self-worth. This may negatively impact their academic performance, and the affected person may start distancing themselves from their friends and family, increasing their chances of depression, anxiety, eating disorders and more.
 - c. Someone's **past trauma** can also be a factor, as it may cause delayed responses leading to disorders like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), sleep disorders, depression and more. Research has found that women who have been victims of trauma or abuse have a much higher chance of developing mental health disorders.
2. What [economic factors](#) cause this issue? How does it do so?
- Studies have shown that **poverty, unemployment and owed debts** are consistently associated with poor mental health amongst adults. These factors are related to higher levels of psychiatric distress, which take a massive toll on the affected person's mental health. Especially due to the current status of the world pandemic, many people have lost their jobs meaning they are unable to provide for their families, and are forced to face this reality every day without a distraction (since they are unemployed), causing even further mental burden as they feel helpless.
 - Furthermore, the pandemic has also caused some specialties like nurses, doctors, and delivery workers etc to work very long hours, with little to no breaks in between. Sufficient rest and sleep plays a massive role in boosting one's mental strength, which is why these health care workers are one of the most affected by anxiety, stress and sleep disorders.
3. What political factors cause this issue? How does it do so?
- Almost all the medical studies surrounding mental health have been conducted based on Western societies and cultures. This centres a Westerners narrative of mental health care and is another cause of the lack of knowledge and resources available to the MENA region. Because of this, people in the MENA region are much more likely not to receive adequate, **culturally appropriate, and effective** help, treatment, and access to the necessary mental health institutes.



- There is no doubt that there's a difference between Western and Eastern societies. This means that the causes of mental distress would differ between the two, and therefore the response needed to help the people would also have to be different. This, however, can only be possible by decolonizing mental health care. So many medical health professionals, including doctors and nurses, have commented on struggling with treating non western patients. They're quick to blame the stigma within the society but choose to ignore and not work on decolonizing their practices for equity in access for all.

4. What other factors cause this issue? Health? Such as a pandemic? Physical? Such as Natural Disasters? Show how each of these root caused has contributed to this problem

- The pandemic has **deteriorated people's mental health**, as shown by a study conducted in the MENA region between May and June of 2020. The study consisted of over 6000 adults, who participated in an online questionnaire. The results showed that over half of the participants felt terrified and helpless because of the pandemic. At the same time over 40% revealed a significant increase in stress levels due to finance and work, which resulted in poorer mental health. However, the positive aspect which this study highlighted was that almost half of the participants had started to focus on their mental health and started spending more time resting. People in the MENA region have also begun to become more aware of mental health, which has helped improve patients reaching out for professional help, and reduced its stigma.

5. How long has this issue been a problem?

- Mental health issues have always existed but only recently received socially accepted widespread recognition. However, because these conditions aren't visible at first sight, most people tend to ignore this topic, which is why it isn't talked about. This has caused lots of stigma surrounding the topic in the MENA region, due to a lack of understanding.

6. Why is this issue a problem? Why does it need to be solved at all?

- Mental health is an essential part of our lives as it counts for our emotional, social and psychological well-being. It plays a massive role in determining the way we think, feel,



act, the decisions we make, and how we deal with stress. Therefore, it is detrimental that everyone maintains sound mental health and can access any resources that may be needed to support their health in this aspect.

- Teenagers, **particularly girls** with mental health disorders are at a greater risk of underperforming at school, isolating themselves from society, and self-harming. This is why it is necessary to take charge and try to solve this issue in the aspect of reinforcing accessibility to mental health services and excluding factors that may worsen mental health.

7. Which organizations benefit from the status quo?

- Many alcohol (although not as common in the MENA countries) and tobacco companies benefit from the status quo, due to the rise in sales of their products. People suffering from mental health issues will do anything for their mental burden to fade away and to feel something that isn't emptiness. This is why they seek comfort in smoking, vaping and other tobacco products, as well as drinking. It gives them a break from their lives even if it's just for a moment. Statistics show that people with psychiatric illnesses are 2 to 5 times more likely to smoke and drink, and that alcohol is a poisonous substance that causes only harm to the physical and mental well being of the consumer.

8. How does your country benefit from the status quo?

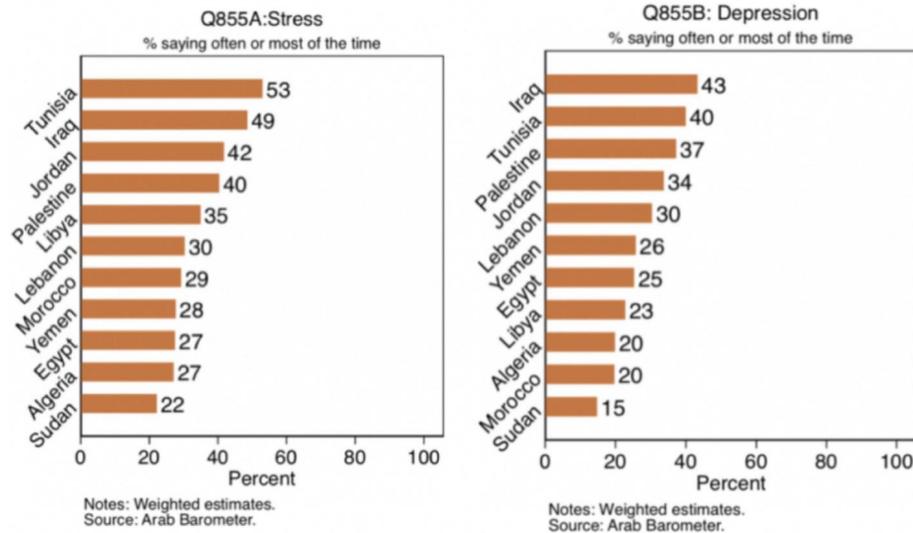
- Countries don't benefit from the status quo at all, as mental health issues correlate with low national productivity, leading to economic loss. Due to the pandemic, many people haven't been able to take holiday breaks from their busy lives as they would've otherwise, due to the fear of contracting the virus. Although this may seem like an advantage to the country as people are 'working more,' that isn't entirely the case. This along with longer working hours and cut in salaries has greatly lowered national productivity, meaning that people are getting less work done over longer periods of time. This is due to a lack of motivation amongst employees, as they feel that their work isn't getting the recognition deserved, which is essential in maintaining good employee motivation.



9. Which countries influence this issue the most? How so?

- Despite the severity of the issue, the governments of the MENA countries allocate very little of their health budgets to mental health care, which needs to be reconsidered. Additionally, many of the patients who come for treatment face misdiagnosis by primary health care physicians. This is because these physicians are overworked most of the time due to their long shifts and also because they have very little training in the mental health field. (More details of individual countries are mentioned in question 11)

10. Which countries/groups are the most impacted by this issue?



Countries in the MENA region affected most by stress and depression

- These statistics show that Iraq and Palestine are two of the most affected countries by stress and depression in the MENA region. These results are most likely caused by the recent incidents of **war in these countries** taking a toll on people's mental health. War demolishes and separates families, leaving them traumatized with disorders like PTSD. Especially, in the long run, victims suffer from immense psychological and physical harm. Death is not the only aspect of war. However, it is often the most highlighted. Other factors include but are not limited to malnutrition, disabilities, and psychosocial

illnesses. Therefore, it's essential to understand the conflict in the first place to come up with impactful solutions.

11. Which countries/groups should take the lead in solving this issue?

- Countries that have already taken steps in the right direction should take the lead in helping to resolve this issue. This is because they'd have the most experience and would therefore be able to list the positives and negatives about their implemented strategies. In turn, producing an overall more interactive discussion would help not only them but also the other countries present. These countries include but aren't limited to:

National Strategies in Qatar



Qatar's national strategies to improve mental health awareness and access

- In Qatar, a Mental Health Strategy was launched for 2013 - 2018, which focused on increasing accessibility and usage of such services.
- In Morocco, psychosocial treatment is available at lower costs to access more people who may need it.
- Lebanon and Kuwait have made significant efforts to decentralize treatment so that it's available to all, and they've attempted to merge mental health into their primary care.

PART 2 of the Research Report: UN Treaties/Policies/Resolutions

This section covers what UN action has been taken to address this issue on the agenda



1. Which resolutions are linked to this issue [ratified](#)?

- In September of 2017, the resolution of HRC (<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/36/13>) was recognized.
- Another resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council was on the 19th of June 2020 (43/13) (<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/43/L.19>), which was adopted without a vote. This resolution was used to call upon member states to implement and strictly monitor the already existing policies on this issue.

2. How far did this resolution solve the issue?

- This resolution was used to recognize and highlight the necessity to completely merge mental health services into the general and primary health care services and provided necessary mental health and community services that aimed to encourage and protect people's liberty and security rights.
- This resolution helped make people aware that mental health truly is a critical topic, which should be focused on and not taken lightly. Therefore, encouraging the nations to take charge and initiate change to maintain their people's mental health and well-being.

3. Why wasn't this resolution completely effective? Was it blocked by a specific organization/country? Were there any objections from a major organization

- This resolution wasn't completely all that effective as although it encouraged member states to take action, not everything was mandatory. This meant that it wasn't ensured that the nations were making the necessary changes needed to better this issue. Additionally, this resolution was adopted without a vote, meaning that the nations may not be completely willing to act upon the resolution, as they didn't get much of a say in its adoption.



- One flaw can be noted in Clause 6 of this resolution, which mentioned the need to eliminate stigma surrounding the topic of mental health. Although very important, a clear and detailed solution to achieve just that wasn't mentioned. Like the last one, this resolution was also adopted without a vote, meaning that the nations may not be completely willing to act upon the resolution, as they didn't get much of a say in its adoption.

Another flaw in this resolution was that countries from the MENA region weren't present to vote on it. This is a flaw, especially considering that these countries may have different views on this resolution, which weren't taken into consideration.

PART 3 of the Research Report: Possible Solutions

1. Raising Awareness

A possible solution is to hold mandatory annual mental health awareness events at school on October 10th (mental health day) in the MENA countries. This can include activities such as nature recreations and school assemblies.

- Pros:
 - This would hopefully help in reducing the stigma surrounding the topic, by spreading awareness and making mental health a more common topic of conversation. Therefore, this would also make it easier for people to seek help when and if needed.
 - This specifically targets adolescents, who would greatly benefit from these activities, especially considering that at least 1 in 5 adolescents have or will experience mental health disorders, which may interfere negatively with their lives.
 - Sometimes school can get very stressful, so having a day of not worrying about work and deadlines, and instead enjoying the outdoors would greatly boost the students' mental health and may be the booster needed to increase academic, emotional and physical performance.



- Cons:

- This may not be the best solution in the long run, as it prioritizes mental health for only one day out of a whole year.
- It may be difficult to ensure that everyone is able to have equal access to these events, as some students may not be enrolled in schools.
- Due to the parents' preconceptions of mental health and the stigma behind it, they may force their children to not take part in such activities.

2. Expand Access to Mental Health Services by Task Shifting

Physician assistants who are specialized in the field of mental health could support the cause by cushioning the mental health workforce. This could be achieved by shifting the supervision of straightforward patients requiring simple clinical decision making to such physician assistants, who work under the administration of psychiatrists.

- Pros:

- This would be greatly beneficial especially in the MENA countries where the availability of psychiatrists is scarce, compared to their need.
- This would allow the psychiatrists to give more time to individuals with more difficult clinical problems, requiring greater levels of experience.

- Cons:

- One downside of this though is that although this solution would make mental health services more accessible, it isn't guaranteed that people would actually be willing to use them if necessary.



PART 4 of the Research Report: Bibliography

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PART 5 of the Research Report (Video): Guiding Questions

- Are mental health facilities accessible in your country? If not, why?
- What initiatives (if any) has your country taken, in hopes of bettering the issue?
- Why is it so important to solve this issue?
- What hurdles may come in the way when trying to come up with solutions?
- Which countries in the Gulf region would most benefit from solving this issue?

