

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

With the advancement of technology and globalization, the radical shift has emerged in society towards changes in family and social bonds and societal supports and network and commercialization of existence. Brundtland (2000) stated that during last century, malaria and tuberculosis remain prominent as major killers in the world, however surprisingly mental illnesses are now increasing in both rich and poor countries. Mental disorders accounted for, approximately 12% of disability adjusted life years lost in 1998. Major depression was ranked fifth in ten leading causes of global disease burden. The most important causes of neuropsychiatric burden are alcohol dependence, bipolar affective disorders and schizophrenia. It was also observed that frequency and intensity of stress and anxiety also have been increased from children to old age people. In developing country like India, mental health has not been given low priority as compared to physical health. Mental health care which is affordable and also effective has not been provided to people. Besides low priority to mental health, poor applications of strategies – lack of awareness among people, health care workers and policy makers. Because of lack of awareness among people, stigma of mental illness which result in to inhibitions from people who seek mental health care. From nursery to university education, workplace and in day to day challenges of today's man, it is very important to take good care of mental health. World Health Organization (WHO) also defines health as *a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*

There is No Health Without Mental Health

- WHO

This research study was formulated to understand practitioners' perspectives on existing scenario of curriculum of psychology in Postgraduation, issues, challenges of psychological practices and need of professional regulation of psychology and to recommend professional development of psychologists in India. Singh (2015) reviewed status of clinical psychology in India from retrospective perspective and derived that teaching, training, research, administration and organizational work from different sectors such as, education, healthcare, corporate, civil services, IT and other governmental organizations needs psychological services, but still there is a lack of talented psychology professionals in India. Singh (2015) found from number of

research studies that 25% of practitioners are going abroad due to poor remuneration and lack of regulatory body and poor future prospect. According to Indian Association of Clinical Psychology (IACP), there are only 872 clinical psychologists in India which is very less in comparison to the population. There are very few people with Ph.D. who are active in the psychology profession. It was found that psychology professionals do not have much career prospect in India and as a result, they prefer to go abroad. Clinical psychologists are treated as assistant to psychiatrists and do not get social recognition and exposure to utilize their psychological skills and abilities. ‘Self-Style Practitioner’ – label is given to practitioners in India due to absence of code of conduct and national regulatory body such as American Psychological Association and British Council of Psychologists.

The study entitled ‘Practitioners’ Perspectives on Education, Psychological Practice and Professional Regulation of Psychology in India’ shed a lot of light on the perspectives of different practitioners in the field of Psychology. Both, quantitative as well as qualitative data helped in analyzing the entire curriculum and practice of Psychology and how, through the years of experience, do practitioners see them as over the years. Keeping the research objectives in mind, the data were collected through qualitative and quantitative means and the data were segregated into different themes.

4.1 Education of Psychology in Postgraduation

Psychology has been considered a degree course in Arts stream (as a Bachelors of Arts (BA) or Masters of Arts (MA)) or Science stream (as a B.Sc. and M.Sc.) in most of the universities in India. Some universities also offer M.Phil. (Masters of Philosophy) and Ph.D. (Doctorate of Philosophy) in Psychology. It was found that Arts, Commerce, Engineering, Law and Medicine are areas where students complete their Postgraduation and start working as an engineer, a doctor and a lawyer respectively.

In India, most of the courses and degrees of universities offer admissions on the basis of merit list of students’ previous education. According to UGC model curriculum, post-graduate program in psychology is an advanced course aimed at competence building among the students from a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective. A large number of practitioners (41.7%) feel that selection of students in Postgraduation in psychology need to be done on the basis of merit list, entrance test and interview while some of the practitioners preferred both merit list and entrance test, merit list and interview was enough for the selection of psychology students. (refer

table 3.7) The root to strengthen any profession lies in the quality of knowledge and training imparted to the students during their academic year. Hence, it is important to measure whether students have required aptitude for the profession. Some common specializations offered by Indian university clinical psychology, counseling psychology, educational psychology, developmental psychology, industrial psychology, social psychology and health psychology.

It was also found from the interviews of practitioners that for specialization in Postgraduation, students should be oriented in the beginning of their postgraduation about each specialization and job opportunities in India. One practitioners commented that, *In India, Students in Postgraduation are pushed to select Specialization on the base of Merit list, no matter what they deserve or what they want*

Stereotyping areas of specialization in Postgraduation in psychology is also a concern for the growth of psychology as a profession. Clinical psychology is being given much attention in by stakeholders such as teaching faculties of universities, governmental and non-government bodies. For example, rehabilitation council of India (RCI) has a provision to give license to practice to students who study from RCI recognized institutes in India. As per the updated list, the number of RCI approved institutions for study and training are 580, which is very less in comparison to the need of people in the country. Second example of stereotyping of clinical psychology is whole different psychological association is established called, Indian Association of Clinical Psychology (IACP). Apart from this, there is not associations for counseling psychology, industrial psychology or educational psychology. Hence, it can be interpreted that all areas of specializations need to be given equal priorities as each have a different significance. It can be initiated from university level by communicating and teaching these areas with equal rate of interest and importance.

Theme one analyzed the overall scenario of Psychology in India and the results showed that largely it needs the importance that other disciplines get. Due to this less importance, practitioners often do what they think is good and convenient to them. Comparing the course with that in other countries abroad, it was found that the emphasis abroad is more on documentation, confidentiality and ethical assessment which is largely missing in India. Hence many practitioners feel that Institutes like NIMHANS, RIPHANS, IBHAAS should take initiatives of accreditation of the discipline of Psychology.

On the subject of curriculum, practitioners largely revealed that it need to be uniform in nature and requires upgradation as per international standards. They also felt that there exists a large gap between theory and practice of Psychology and the link needs to be established through channelized research, adequate and supervised training at post graduate level and at the same time there is an urgent need to give equal weightage to theory and practical with adequate introduction of training-oriented curriculum.

Uniformity in the curriculum is an essential need to enhance the educational system in most of the country as it will be able to ensure the fair competition and all the students will be educated with equal amount knowledge, skills and abilities. In India, at university level, uniformity of curriculum has been practiced in the field of medicine only. When asked about the need of uniformity of curriculum in Postgraduation of psychology, most of the practitioners supported the need of uniformity in curriculum on all over the nation. As per the article cited in essay forum, uniform curriculum also helps a teacher to pertain to the necessities specified in the curriculum and can help her develop or coach student in required manner. It was also reflected from the interviews that uniform curriculum can be an important factor for the betterment of the nation in producing young passionate and competitive minds who will be also strengthen the psychology profession.

4.2 - Challenges in Psychological Practices

India need a number of psychologists and mental health professionals to help people deal with mental health related challenges (Agrawal, 2015). In this study, practitioners were asked about their perspectives regarding severity of various challenges faced by practitioners. It was derived from the intensity indices of various challenges that lack of regulatory body in psychology in India and lack of support from Govt./Non-Govt. psychological associations to strengthen the psychology profession were considered major concern by all practitioners. According to National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO, 2002), 1.49% of population in India is suffering from mental health issues. It was also reported that three to five percent of teenagers, studying in 9th standard or above show the symptoms of depression and most important concern is 30% to 50% of cases were gone unnoticed.

In India, Central Board of Secondary Education guidelines demand each school to have one counselor. But this criterion covers only 3% of schools of India and moreover, not all CBSE

schools have qualified school counselor. In current scenario, unlike abroad, most of the hospitals don't have psychiatry and psychology departments. In most cases, psychiatrists are doing jobs of psychologists and counselors. Some good hospitals chains have started recruiting counselors and also looking for skilled and trained psychology professionals. According to APA's center for workforce Studies, there were 106,500 licensed psychologists in United States in 2014. (APA 2014). There is no such data about psychology professionals is available in India. Associations such National Academy of Psychology (NAOP), Indian Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) and Indian Association of Clinical Psychology (IACP) offer memberships to psychology professionals all over India, but other than that there is no other initiative such as, skill-based training, professional development programs and monitoring and supervision of current psychological practices to strengthen the psychology profession.

Lack of awareness to seek mental health services among people and misuse of the terms 'Counselor' and 'Psychologist' are the major challenges practitioners have rated the most. In India, like engineering, law and medicine, it is believed that after finishing Postgraduation in these areas, students become 'Engineer', 'Lawyer' and 'Doctor' respectively. In case of psychology, there is no standards set by Government or any other psychology associations. Students get license of 'Clinical Psychologist' only they study M.Phil. in Clinical Psychology from RCI recognized institutes in India. Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) offers three courses in Clinical Psychology which are, Masters of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology (M.Phil.), Professional Diploma in Clinical Psychology and Psy. D in Clinical Psychology. There are only 8 institutes which offers M.Phil. in Clinical Psychology which is quite low compared to the need in the society. Because of lack of resources to seek mental health care and also stigma attached to it, there is a wide gap in understanding of the importance of mental health. Because of lack of awareness regarding mental health care, the quality of psychological practices is hampered. If an individual who has realized the need to consult psychologist, but is not aware about resources, he or she will go to any professional without knowing the authenticity of services. In India, the scenario is worse. People do not even check or inquire about the degree or qualification of doctor for their physiological health issues. Mental health is too far to be considered by them. The Government has realized the importance and need of spreading mental health awareness however, RCI recognized colleges in India being only 8 in number, many

professionals choose to leave the country and practice abroad. This is a major brain drain challenge for a country like India where Psychology is fairly a young practicing discipline.

1.3. Professional Regulation of Psychology in India

According to RCI Act (2000), the primary objective was to provide licensing to psychologists who are working with disabled and needing rehabilitation and registered with RCI. Apart from disability and people who need rehabilitation, there are large number of people who are suffering anxiety, stress, lack of self-esteem and many more daily life mental problems in the areas of Education, Healthcare, Organizations, Sports, Civil Services, etc. In such cases, expertise of psychology other than clinical psychology and rehabilitations psychology is equally important Educational psychology, Counseling Psychology, Industrial Psychology, Criminal Psychology and Developmental Psychology. Unlike, American Psychological Association (APA), European Federation of Psychological Association (EFPA), Australian Psychological Society (APS), there is no such regulatory body for the monitoring and licensing of psychology professionals from all areas in India. Issacs's (2009) research shared the concern that the role of MA level psychologists and special educators are poorly defined or it can be also said that it is not defined at all. In the era of globalization, technology is changing every facet of human lives so rapidly that it is being difficult to adjust and also affecting mental health. Being overly connected to technology can cause psychological issues such as distraction, narcissism, expectation of instant gratification, and even depression. Overuse of technology can also have negative repercussions on physical health causing vision problems, hearing loss, and neck strain. In absence of professional regulation in the country, two situations have emerged. Psychological services delivered by practitioners are losing the quality in the absence of supervision and the rate of malpractices has been increased which is indirectly affecting the quality of psychological practices.

4.4 - CONCLUSION

On the basis of practitioners' perspectives on education of psychology, psychological practices and need of professional regulation in India, it can be concluded that psychology in India needs a serious attention from Government agencies for curriculum development, professional development and license for psychology professionals. Psychology in India has ample amount of opportunities for prospective psychology professionals. Professional development of practitioners is also perceived to be significant role to increase quality services in psychological practices and to sustain potential psychology professionals in India. Uniformity in Psychology curriculum in Postgraduation is perceived to be most important aspect for the betterment of education and training in psychology. Need of regulatory body for license of practitioners is also perceived most challenging aspect which affect the education, training, assessment and professional development of practitioners. The practitioners have recommended a framework for postgraduate psychology curriculum and pedagogy which includes knowledge, skills and attitude on the basis of essential competencies of professional development for psychology professionals.

4.5 - IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study has significant implications in understanding existing scenario of psychology from the perspectives of practitioners. The practical implications of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. Procedures for selecting students and allocation of specialization subjects in Postgraduation were perceived to be implied not just focusing on merit list but also aptitude and interest of a student in given subject.
2. Uniformity for curriculum of Psychology in Postgraduation is perceived as a significant aspect for the education of Psychology.
3. Psychology curriculum is needs attention for updating by UGC and the ratio of theory and practical need to be followed by universities as per UGC guidelines.
4. Psychology as profession needs a serious attention from the Government and other stakeholders to streamline it by the establishment of regulatory body for licensure of practitioners and implementation of quality psychological services in India.

4.6 - LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- For quantitative data collection, the web-based survey was sent to more than 5000 practitioners, but it was delimited to the people who access their emails on regular basis and who were also active on LinkedIn and Facebook.

4.742 - DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

After the four years of research work and experiences in understanding existing scenario in Psychology in this study, the following suggestions are offered for future consideration of research in this area.

- Further research can be carried out for the standardization of the definitions of the words used for psychology professional such as, ‘Psychologist’, ‘Psychotherapist’ and ‘Counselor’.
- Research in Psychology in India was also one of the factor, supposed to be explored in this study, but then it was kept for further research.
- Professional development programs can be developed and implemented at university level to make competent psychologist.
- Government and other stakeholders such as non-government psychological associations need to develop and promote programs for mental health awareness in community.
- Government and Non-government psychological associations also need to initiate programs for monitoring and supervising psychological services to strengthen the profession of psychology and also to minimize malpractices carried out by people from non-psychological background.

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