

Mental Health crisis during Covid-19 Pandemic: A Gender Dimension on 30th June 2020.

Chandraprabha Saikiani Centre for Women Studies Tezpur University organized a webinar on Mental Health crisis during Covid-19 Pandemic: A Gender Dimension on 30th June 2020.

Dr. Mousumi Mahanta, Assistant Professor, Chandraprabha Saikiani Centre for Women Studies, Tezpur University moderated the sessions. Dr. Mahanta heartily welcomed all the participants explaining mental health and its vitality in the society and also explained the Covid -19 impact on mental health led by socio-economic factors. She also shared her personal experience of interacting with students. Further she explained impact of pandemic on maternal health.

Dr. Kalpana Srivastava, Scientist 'G', President of Indian Association of Clinical Psychologist Armed Force Medical College, Pune started her session explaining gender and different role and challenges of women as homemaker, spouse, mother, working mother, single mother etc. she defines gender role as responsibility. She illustrated that pandemic added more challenges to women and gender role. She opined that this pandemic had widened the inequalities between men and women in terms of economy, labour and employment. She further explained that work from home is also a great challenge for women. Women are 24/7 within the four wall during this pandemic has led domestic violence, intimate partner violence. It also affected privacy of women. Pregnancy during Covid-19 is a new challenge which led more stress to women folk. Mental Health of women is important concern during pandemic because this pandemic can led more stressful life for women, she opined. She suggested that advocacy, socialization of child and sharing responsibility can make home safe for women. She also explained the coping mechanism with anxiety, depression of women, she suggested women to make home management simple so that it will be participatory for child and other member of house. Women are also advised to spare few time for herself, take rest and be active daily.

Dr. Vindra MN, Associate Professor, Department of psychiatric Social Work & Consultant of AWAKE Clinic at NCWB Bengaluru, talked on 'Gender and Women Mental Health' explaining the facts of National Mental Health Survey 2017. She explained the impact of pandemic on young women due to lack of access to mental health service, pre-natal services and other health services. She also illustrated women front-line workers who are caregiver of workplace as well as home are more prone to infected by virus. They are also subjected to violence at home and workplace through various mode including cyber sites. She also linked mental health and labour, she opined that due to loss of employment and labour they are more prone to anxiety and mental health issues. She focused on digital gender gap also, due to the lack of digital skill women are not able access various services during pandemic. She further explained how Covi-19 has affected women education especially young girls, she opined it will increase young girl child dropout in near future as our society prefers boy over girls education. She suggested women to be prepared for any kind of crisis and advice to reach out any kind of emergency service provider.

Dr. Bondona Timugpi, Assistant Professor, Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur, Assam, she started talked about mental health through medical perspective, she mentioned about the biological cause and consequences of mental health, anxiety, stress and depression. She mentioned that status of mental health and anxiety affected the social life, relationship and personality of an individual. She also said gender also play significant role on mental health. Women and men experiences stress differently due to biological differences of male and

female, hormonal status also effect women and women differently which led to some physical obstacle as well as it affect reproductive health of women. She said that Covid-19 situation is stressful; coping with this stress is very challenging in current health situation therefore she suggested a healthy life through good sleep, physical exercises, yoga. She talked about wellness plan to cope with mental health issues.

Dr. Namami Sharma, Assistant Professor, Department of Social work, Tezpur University, she share cases of domestic violence to show how lockdown due to pandemic had affected women life differently to deferent women, she talked about how safe women in home, she said that domestic violence is the third pandemic. she mentioned National Commission for women report on domestic violence during pandemic which indicate the increase of domestic violence two fold than before pandemic. She also cleared that domestic violence cases reporting are also declining due to lack of privacy and access to reporting platform. She referred a cases of domestic violence which occurred during lockdown, she also mention 'Gas Lighting' concept to referred case of Domestic Violence. She said that this lockdown due to pandemic affected women and made over burdened as there is no access agencies who provide justice. She also focused trans-gender community who are facing mental trauma during their stay with family during lockdown. She referred Nazaria an organization who dealt with the issues of trans-gender community. Further she referred the issues of sex workers, violence of sex workers by brothel owners and middlemen. She mentioned the role of Swati an organization base on Maharastra who worked to train Asha Worker online to deal with Domestic Violence. She mentioned the significance of village level institution to intervene domestic violence and monitor the women issues. She also talked about to engage men in intervention of women issues and gender issues.

Many participants interacted with the resource persons on various issues of deprivation of women in access to mental health services, coping mechanism to stress especially the women who are at the disadvantages strata in the society, family expectations and gender roles. Many personal issues had been discussed in the session.

The sessions were very interactive and pro-activate in dealing the issues of women mental health. Dr. Mousumi Mahanta on behalf of Chandraprabha Saikiani Centre for Women Studies, Tezpur University winded up the webinar by acknowledging gratitude to resource persons and the participants.