

Religion and Philosophy Affected Stigma against Mental Illness and Impact on the Mental Health Care in India and China

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ABSTRACT

Mental illness has been a prevalent issue around the world however; an existing stigma against mental illness is preventing the development of proper mental health care and resources. This phenomenon is seen in the countries of India and China. Considering a stigma is developed within the society based on some beliefs upheld by the general population, it was in the best interest to investigate religions and philosophies that people in both China and India follow and uphold. This paper aims to answer the research question of "In what ways has religion and philosophy, specifically Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, affected stigma against mental illness and thus the available mental health care in India and China?"

Through research done on the four religions/philosophies, certain connections could be made. In India, Hinduism views mental illness as a result of a lack of faith and adherence to rituals. In Islam, mental illness is also believed to be due to a lack of faith. Such negative views of mental health could be contributing to the large treatment gap in India. In China, Confucianism seems to be the reason why a mental illness stigma exists. Confucianism emphasizes adherence to societal views, even if that means suppressing emotion. This causes people to look down upon mental illness and justifies people staying away from those with mental illnesses rather than helping them. On the other hand, Buddhism, the majority religion/philosophy in China, seeks to reduce mental health stigma. Buddhist beliefs could be the cause of the increase in demand for mental health care.

The connections made are beneficial to understanding the root of mental health stigma and can be used in the future to combat the stigma and start increasing awareness and available mental health care.

Keywords

Mental health, Religion, Philosophy, Mental health stigma, Mental health care in India and China.

Introduction

Mental health has been a topic of discussion in the Western world as one in five people in the United States has a mental illness according to the National Institute of Mental health. In the United States, there is a multitude of mental health resources, and the impact of mental illnesses has been researched and studied for years. However, in the Eastern world, such research is not done at the same rate due to a stigma against mental health that has not been addressed to the degree it has been addressed in the Western

world. In Asia, the importance of mental health has been dismissed and the prevalence of mental illnesses has not been addressed. As the first child in my family to complete schooling in the United States, I could see the mental illness stigma upheld by my Indian relatives.

In general, such stigmas stem from a "lack of awareness, lack of education, lack of perception and the nature and complications of mental illness" according to Julio Arboleda-Florez, the Director of the WHO Regional Unit for Research and Training in Psychiatric Epidemiology [1]. It seems that there is a lack of awareness and a lack of perception that prevents a spread of education regarding mental illness in both India and China. This is widely recognized

but previous research has only looked at the prevalence of specific mental illnesses and the existing stigma but the causes and effects of the stigma are not discussed, leading to the idea that religion and philosophy could be contributing factors.

Religions and philosophies in the Eastern hemisphere vary from the majority religions of the Western hemisphere, Christianity, thus viewing mental health very differently. This thought leads to the question of “In what ways has religion and philosophy (specifically Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) affected stigmas against mental illness and thus the available mental health care in India and China?”.

Through extensive research on the beliefs of Hinduism and Islam in India and Buddhism and Confucianism in China, a correlation can be made between religious/philosophical ideas, the mental illness stigma, and the lack of mental health care in both countries. Hinduism views mental illness as the result of a lack of faith, which is like the Islamic view of mental illness. Both religions' negative view of mental illness seems to contribute to the treatment gap of 70% to 92 % in India [2,3]. In China, the mental health stigma seems to stem from Confucianism, which emphasizes one's adherence to society and suppression of emotions. These beliefs cause society to believe that mental illness deviates from what is considered normal since the individual could not control their own emotions [4]. In contrast, Buddhism seeks to reduce mental health stigma [5]. These connections made between both religions/philosophies in both India and China, the mental illness stigma, and mental health care cannot be considered a definite conclusion as a correlation between two concepts cannot prove that one is directly causing the other. Perhaps this study could be continued through survey work and more information on the religious or philosophical affiliations of those who do seek mental health care could be attained. This would help one understand which religion or philosophy promotes mental health care and allow a conclusion to be made that would be supported by quantified data.

Background

To properly answer “In what ways has religion and philosophy, specifically Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, affected stigma against mental illness and thus the available mental health care in India and China?”, one must first understand what mental illness is and why mental health is important. According to the Center for Disease Control, mental illnesses are “conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling mood or behavior such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia” [5]. Mental illnesses hinder one's ability to deal with their emotions and do tasks that would be considered normal or easy. To prevent mental illnesses, it recommended that one takes care of their mental health which includes “emotional, psychological and social well-being” [6]. Even though at times the mind can be easily controlled, it is often difficult to do so without proper resources or counseling to deal with the symptoms of mental illnesses. These symptoms vary depending on the mental illness, but some general symptoms of mental illnesses are sadness, confusion, excessive fear, extreme mood changes, and tiredness. Not only do these mental illnesses

take a toll on your mental health but also your physical health. If symptoms are not treated, then it could lead to disability and suicide [7]. Unfortunately, 800,000 people worldwide commit suicide every year due to mental health issues and alcohol abuse [8].

In the United States, these statistics are taken into consideration leading to heightened mental health awareness, a slightly reduced stigma against mental illness, and a wide variety of resources available to the population for mental illness treatment. However, the situation is quite different in Asia. Asia is the largest continent in the world, and it is no surprise that such a stigma against mental illness could develop since there is such a wide variety of religions, philosophies, and cultures that could shape how mental illness symptoms should be viewed and handled [9]. Religions and philosophies offer different perspectives of the world. Therefore, it would be reasonable to look at religions and philosophies to determine whether they affect the stigma against mental illness and the available mental health care within a certain region.

As stated in the introduction, India and China were chosen as the countries of focus in Asia for studying religions and their views on mental illness and mental health. Both India and China have a wide variety of religions and philosophies, both ancient and modern, that is still practiced and maintained. Both countries are also the largest in size and population allowing a more diverse set of religions and philosophies to be integrated into societal conventions and ideals. Therefore, it can be inferred that religious ideals and philosophical concepts were integrated into societal views and stigma against mental illnesses and the value of mental health. These two countries also have the highest rates of mental illness in the world. In 2017, India and China were the only two countries in the world that had 20-30 million DALYs from mental health and substance use disorders [10]. A DALY is considered a measure of the total burden of disease and is equal to “one lost year of healthy life” [10].

Before going into religions and philosophies and how they impact mental illness stigma, one should realize that religions and philosophies are not the only factors playing into mental illness stigma, mental health awareness, and mental health care in these two countries. The other most important factor would be the economic status. There are differences in the economies of these two countries that could contribute to the lack of mental health awareness and education, which could influence the stigma seen in both countries. However, the economic situation of both of the countries is not taken into consideration for this paper, which stops one from concluding that one thing causes another.

Mental Illness and the Stigma Against it in India

Having personal experience with how Indians view mental illnesses, it is understood that the stigma against mental illness and mental health has been taught and maintained throughout generations. Through a study conducted by the World Health Organization, it was found that “India accounted for nearly 15% of the global mental, neurological and substance abuse disorders” [11]. This is an extremely significant percentage because the Indian population

is 17.7% of the total world population [12]. Previously provided statistics included individuals of all ages, but when looking at just children, it becomes evident that mental disorders are starting from a young age. An article in the Indian Journal of Psychiatry, states that at any moment, nearly 50 million Indian children suffer from mental health disorders [13].

In an article written by the Psychiatry Department of the Armed Forces Medical College in Maharashtra, India, it was mentioned that they would like to take the initiative to enhance mental health awareness by generating its demand, which will lead to recognition of mental illness and the adoption of preventive measures [15]. It is evident that there is a desire for initiatives to be taken but the stigma has been upheld for generations is preventing such initiatives. This is why the study of religions and philosophies, existing for long periods, would aid in the understanding of the stigma as it would explain, to a certain extent, how religious/philosophical beliefs were integrated into social views and thus the mental illness stigma over the years.

Mental Illness Stigma in China

The World Health organization found that neuropsychiatric disorders such as depression and schizophrenia in China contribute to about 17.6% of the global burden of disease [15]. WHO also stated that in China approximately 54 million people have depression and around 41 million individuals suffer from anxiety disorders (“Mental Health.”)? After looking at a study conducted in 2005 it was concluded that since 12-29% of children and adolescents have mental disorders in developing countries, that corresponds to 50-120 million children in China with mental disorders in need of proper treatment [16].

The religions/ philosophies chosen for this research paper are Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. In India, the top two religions are Hinduism and Islam. 80.5% of Indians are Hindus and 13.4% of Indians are Muslims (Orgi). In China, a majority religion/philosophy is Buddhism, being followed by 16.6% of the population [17]. The other religion/philosophy being studied is Confucianism and even though a small percentage of the population still follows the philosophical ideals, those ideals have been followed and integrated into the social views of modern China as it was upheld by past authoritative figures in hopes of maintaining uniformity and law in the Zhou dynasty and under Han Emperor Wu ruling from 140-87 B.C.E [18].

History of Islam

Islam is monotheistic religion having an omniscient God known as Allah, which is in current day Saudi Arabia. It is believed that the prophet Muhammad received Allah’s word through Gabriel the Angel and that humans have free will, but they must abide by the word revealed to Muhammad (“Islam”). A close relationship with Allah, gained through adherence to the word and praying, is emphasized. Unwillingness to follow the word and properly pray leads to life issues, such as mental illness, that stem from demons (*jinn*s), evil eye (*‘ayn*), sorcery (*sahr*), or envy (*hasad*) (Rassool, G. Hussein.).

History of Hinduism

Hinduism involves many Gods and deities and encompasses a variety of religious and philosophical ideals. Most Hindus worship a single deity but still believe in the other deities within the religion classifying it as a henotheistic religion (“Hinduism.”). The concepts of reincarnation and *karma*, the view that good can cause good and bad causes bad, and the effects can be seen in one’s present life or one’s reincarnated life [18]. It is also believed that bad *karma* can be prevented through rituals such as worshipping at the temple or giving an offering to a God or deity. Hinduism also emphasizes achieving dharma, which is a way of life based on virtue or morality or carrying out their responsibilities in the world [19].

History of Buddhism

Buddhism called both a religion and a philosophy dates to 6th century B.C.E by Siddharth Gautama, now known as Buddha [20] Siddharth Gautama stepped away from his life of luxury and wealth when he recognized the prevalence of human suffering. He left behind his family and meditated under a tree until he reached nirvana or a state of enlightenment in which he understood how to prevent suffering. He developed Four Noble Truths, the first one being that life is suffering, referred to as *dukkha* which relates to the prevalence of mental illnesses in human beings [20]. Buddhism also places importance on *samadhi*, which is the word, used for developing one’s mind. It involves concentration and meditation. It is also believed that the emotions of anger, resentment, and blame are sources of pain towards oneself and towards others [4].

History of Confucianism

Confucianism is an ancient Chinese philosophy of having a peaceful yet productive life. It was created by Confucius, a scholar that investigated the past and greatly valued virtues and understood that society can only go forward with cooperation and respect. He believed that all people are innately good and that they are more likely to do what is right. He also believed that the belief in a higher power is beneficial if it reduces ego and encourages one to consider the wellbeing of others, but that one should also have control over one’s instincts that should adhere to the code of ethics. There is also a focus on four cardinal virtues of benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, and propriety that are essential to a good life [4].

Knowing the history of each religion/philosophy allows one to have a general idea of what the religion or philosophy encompasses. Now we can study the specific beliefs and ideas within each of these religions to conclude whether the mental health stigma could have stemmed from religious or philosophical beliefs and thus be able to understand the amount of mental health care available

Religion/Philosophy and Mental Health care in India Hindu views on Mental Illnesses and Mental Health

As stated before, 80.5% of Indians are Hindus, so it is inevitable that Hindu beliefs would diffuse into societal conventions. Hinduism generally believes in a balance between physical, physiological, and psychological levels to reach a state of peace or tranquility

[2]. Therefore, it is believed that without the health of the mind, the body itself will not be healthy even if the other aspects of one's body is functioning properly [2].

It is believed that a balance of physical, physiological, and psychological levels can be attained through the practice of meditation in Hinduism. Meditation promotes reflection on the past and present, attempting to understand one's mental health state by thinking about oneself. The practice of meditation in Hinduism is referred to as Yoga. The "Yoga Sūtra of Patanjali" is a set of texts about the theories related to yoga and the practice of yoga itself and it states that the soul should be a spectator of the mind's activity during meditation [21,22]. In this belief, the mind separates itself from extreme emotion and attempts to reach a calm state [22]. Therefore, in Hinduism, proper mental health can be attained through meditation in which factors disturbing the balance of the mind and body can be understood and eventually gain a sense of emotional control, known as *vairagya* (The Hindu). In this manner, Hinduism promotes mental health in the terms of understanding oneself and how their mind works with their body and soul.

However, Hinduism's view of mental illness is not as positive. There are a few causes of the perspectives of mental illnesses in Hinduism. One cause is the lack of control over the mind that is a result of little to no meditation and prayer. Another view of mental illness is that it is part of *karma*. This concept involves the fact that bad actions, negative thoughts, and words can have many negative consequences that can be experienced in one's current life or an upcoming reincarnated life if one does not have good *karma* [23]. It is also believed that mental illnesses including depression or schizophrenia are a result of that bad *karma*. Essentially saying that one's actions in this life or a previous life are the reason for the mind, soul, body balance, or the mental illness itself.

These views escalate mental illness stigma by viewing the mental illness as the individual's fault for not being able to control their mind despite the possibility for multiple causes ranging from genetics or biological factors to substance or alcohol abuse. In essence, mental illness is seen as a lack of faith or the effect of bad *karma* that one has brought upon themselves.

A third view is that it is the result of evil eye. In the Hindu faith, the evil eye is cast upon something that is desired. According to A. Stewart Woodburne, a theology professor who has studied religion and human nature, evil eye often comes from a place of jealousy and supposedly causes what other people desire to be reversed or destroyed [24]. An example of evil eye is when someone looks at a smiling, healthy child, and they desire such a child and such thoughts will inflict evil eye upon the child and eventually cause the child to lose his/her beautiful smile or his/her health [25]. A similar occurrence could happen when a person is jealous of another individual's mental health or wellbeing, which will in turn cause the downfall of that person's mental health leading to mental illnesses. However, the evil eye could be cast through what is known as *karani*, or black magic that directly causes stress

on another person because an individual worships Shiva, a deity within Hinduism [25].

The concept of "evil eye" being the cause of mental illness also furthers the mental health stigma found in India because it means that the individual with the mental illness did not do the proper rituals such as using camphor or coconut to reduce distressing vibrations and eventually cast off evil eye [26]. This characterizes the individual as not spiritual and overwhelmed by the evil eye, causing society to avoid them.

Hindu based views can affect the amount of available mental illness and mental health resources. This is because the Hindu faith views mental illness as something inevitable that could be one's fault or because someone cast evil eye upon them and the individual wasn't strong in the faith enough to do the necessary rituals to prevent the effects of evil eye. Therefore, mental illness can only be cured or treated by oneself through Hindu based rituals.

Another treatment is based on the Hindu belief that there needs to be a balance between the mind, body, and soul for one to maintain one's wellbeing. This is known as Ayurvedic treatment, coming from the Vedic texts [27]. Ayurveda first attempts to internally heal an individual with herbal medicines, massages, or yoga and meditation (which as mentioned before as essential to attaining mental wellbeing in the Hindu faith). Ayurvedic medicine is still used by 70% of the rural population in India, which is approximately 624,589,000 people in India [28]. The ayurvedic treatment concerning mental illness is a form of psychotherapy in which a guru, a teacher, guides a chela, or a disciple, through his sufferings to remove mental illness symptoms, help moderate the related behaviors, and encourage personal growth [29]. Ayurveda views the mind as having three parts, *Satwa* (balance), *Raja* (arrogance), and *Tama* (indolence), and any *Doshas*, or impurities, should be removed for these three parts to be properly maintained for mental health [29]. If these *doshas* are not removed then they are believed to develop into anxiety, depression, or hysteria. These doshas must be removed by yourself which is encouraged through the story of Hanuman, another Hindu god/deity, who had issues with understanding his potential because of a supposed mental illness and once he was able to understand his mind and attain wellbeing in *Satwa*, *Raja* and *Tama*, he was able to get his powers back [29]. This is based on the Hindu faith and if spiritual growth does not happen, rituals that involve "black magic" and possible violence could be used to free the individual from any possible evil eye or spirits believed to be taking over the body.

Perhaps the firm faith in these Hindu beliefs and Ayurveda cause Hindu patients to believe that Western treatment focusing more on specific parts of the body for treatment, which in the case of mental illness and mental health is the brain, is not sufficient in treating the illness they see as spirituality or faith issues. In 1982 there were less than 1000 psychiatrists available leading to the formation of a National Mental Health Programme to increase available mental health care and normalize what would be considered western mental illness treatment but the efforts were not widely received

[30]. Perhaps the reliance on Hindu treatment methods and the religious disdain of mental illness symptoms was the reason why there were less than 1000 psychiatrists available in India and why the program is still struggling to provide proper mental health care.

A reliance on Hindu treatment methods could also contribute to the treatment gap of 70-92%, meaning that 70-92% of people who have mental illness are not receiving proper treatment, which involves psychotherapy, medicine, or case management [3]. Such little belief in western treatments could also possibly contribute to the fact that there are only “5,000 psychiatrists in India, or 0.3 for every 100,000 persons, and less than 2,000 clinical psychologists (0.07 per 100,000)” which is significantly less than that of other developed countries [3]. This could mean that fewer people are becoming psychiatrists or clinical psychologists because they have strong faith in Hindu practices or that since a majority of the Indian population does not believe in other methods of helping with mental illness, or does not accept the fact that certain behaviors are mental illness symptoms, that there would be no point in taking on these roles.

Islamic Views of Mental Illness and Mental Health

Unlike Hinduism, Islam is followed by a smaller percentage of the Indian population so its beliefs would most likely not be as widespread but are significant, nonetheless. Islam is a monotheistic religion, in which Allah (God) has provided them with his word through Prophet Muhammad so that they may live a tranquil life (“Islam”). Therefore, if any mental illness symptoms do occur in an individual, the Islamic faith typically associates them with demons (*jinn*s), evil eye (*‘ayn*), sorcery (*sihr*), or envy (*hasad*) (Rassool, G. Hussein.). It is evident that there is some overlap in how both Hinduism and Islam view the causes of mental illness as both believe that evil eye coming from a place of envy and sorcery, in Hinduism referred to as “black magic”. Islam also believes that a close connection to Allah, will improve psychological functioning and reduce the likelihood of developing mental illness symptoms.

The holy book of Islam, the Qur’an is supposed to guide one through any emotional distress so that the individual will become stronger. This is evident through a *Hadith* or saying of the Prophet Muhammad, “There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment” [31]. There is encouragement in the Qur’an for Islamic followers to be patient and they will receive desired peace seen through verses such as “O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient” (The Qur’an 2:153). The Qur’an also directly addresses mental illness symptoms. It is believed that there is a “carnal self” known as *nafs al-ammārah* that pushes an individual to sin or display symptoms of mental illness meaning that there is an external force or being that disrupts mental health [32]. *Nafs al-ammārah* can be avoided through *nafs al-lawwama*, where one is conscious of imperfections and weaknesses enough to avoid them and control the *nafs al-ammārah*. From there an individual would be motivated to reach a state of perfection with tranquility and peace without any sinful desires known as *nafs al-mutmainna* [31].

So with the *nafs* in the Islamic faith, it can be understood that a lack of faith or lack of *nafs al-lawwama* is the root of mental illness symptoms and can be fixed with a technique in the Qur’an known as *muraqabah*, or mindfulness (Parrott). This concept is like the Western concept of metacognition, which is often used in the treatment of mental illness and the maintenance of mental health. In terms of Islam, it involves gaining more knowledge of Allah and being aware that Allah knows about one’s relationship with themselves.

This view of attaining mental health and preventing mental illness by growing in faith slightly increases the stigma against mental illness as it is seen as one’s responsibility to fully prevent mental illness symptoms and similar to Hinduism, disregards factors such as genetics or substance abuse.

As mentioned before, the other concept in Islam that explains mental illness is the presence of a jinn or demon. Jinn possession can cause supernatural occurrences or a change in behavior and consciousness causing an individual to change expressions and tone of voice. These symptoms could be symptoms of borderline personality disorder or schizophrenia [33]. *Jinns* are believed to be beings, living in another world, which have the same abilities as humans but can take on different forms and thus enter a human. Therefore, the only way to get rid of the jinn would be to go to a person that has a strong faith in Allah and is mindful. The person would recite verses from the Qur’an, commanding the jinn to leave the possessed body. At times despite being considered far from Islamic teachings, the body of the possessed is struck in hopes of inflicting pain and scaring the jinn to leave [34]. Such beliefs often take precedence over scientific evidence partly because such beliefs have been upheld for years and deviance from such beliefs would cause social disdain. It is also due to the idea that only a person straying away from Allah’s teachings would experience mental illness symptoms and it would be encouraged to cite the Qur’an rather than evidence that is developed out of the religious and cultural settings of Islam. Adhering to such beliefs also reduces the hassle of finding mental health care in a place where it is limited and it is much easier to find a person strong in their faith in Allah’s power that specializes in getting rid of *jinn*s.

In some cases, Allah is believed to be the cause of all illness and the time of illness is meant to be a time in which one gets closer to Allah [35]. So, in this case, there is no stigma in mental illness as it is just something bestowed on someone by Allah but perhaps the effect of the illness could also further the stigma.

Such Islamic beliefs affect mental health care in India as it places the treatment or cure of mental illness symptoms completely in the faith. However, such a view could aid in the treatment of a patient, as metacognition techniques could be combined with the faith to achieve western mental health care, as provided by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, to a larger population and reduce the prevalence of mental illness. For example, there are Qur’an verses that directly relate to depression (verses 94:5-6, 12:87, etc.) and anxiety disorder (3:159) that will give the patient spiritual strength

and thus a stronger belief in the ability to control one's mind and any mental illness symptoms [36].

Unfortunately, if the mental illness is viewed as jinn possession then the possible physical violence or isolation from society could just further the seriousness of mental illness symptoms. In addition to the stigma already created by Hindu beliefs, Islamic beliefs could be contributing to a treatment gap seen in Uttar Pradesh, a state in India that has 18.5% of the Indian Muslim population. Uttar Pradesh has a treatment gap of 70-100% for mental illnesses [37]. The Indian states of West Bengal and Kerala, with larger Muslim populations, also have relatively high cases of depression and anxiety disorders compared to the other states [38]. However, in Kerala, the prevalence of depressive disorders is being taken into consideration to create a primary health care system that also attempts to treat mental illness symptoms [39].

Religion/Philosophy and Mental Health care in China **Buddhist views on Mental Illness and Mental Health**

As mentioned before, Buddhism is the majority religion/philosophy in China being followed by 16.6% of the population. With its heavy focus on developing one's mind through concentration and meditation, there is the possibility of a more positive view of mental illness.

Considering Buddhism is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, known as Buddha, it would be in the best interest to see how he views mental illness first. He destigmatizes mental illness by presenting the story of a mentally disturbed woman name Patacara who wandered naked in her town after a series of unfortunate events with her husband and her children. When she saw Buddha and his disciples, she realized her state and he listened to her life story. He understood her situation and she eventually totally attained detachment. She became the embodiment of self-discipline and compassion and helped many troubled souls who came to the monastery seeking solace [5]. As this story has been told for generations and upheld, it is evident that Buddhism understands the effects of mental illness as seen through the actions of Patacara, and that one can attain good mental health through attaining detachment as taught to Patacara by Buddha [5].

Buddhism also attempts to create a total understanding of interconnectedness and thus puts the mental illness in a social and cultural context. Buddhism attempts to understand why mental illness symptoms such as sadness or excessive fear become prevalent. According to Dalai Lama, the head monk of Tibetan Buddhism, one can attain happiness and peace that could be disrupted by mental illness symptoms, through reducing anger, hate, and envy [40]. According to Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negri, the director of the Emory-Tibetan Partnership, daily meditation will allow one to find peace and have awareness of the emotions the mind is processing [40]. Meditation in Sanskrit is known as *dhyana*, and four stages need to be passed for someone to reach *nirvana* or a state of transcendence. These four stages are a detachment from the external world and being conscious of joy, concentration, being at ease and then pure self-possession and

equanimity [41]. While meditating, one will be able to realize what may be preventing them from reaching a state of nirvana or preventing the body and mind from becoming one [42].

When looking at mental illness symptoms, in Buddhism it is believed that *karma* can be used to help change them. In Buddhism, *karma* is the concept of "the action of body, speech, and mind, affecting every aspect of our life" which differs from Hinduism's definition of "good leading to good and bad leading to bad" [43]. The Buddhist definition places emphasis on the influence that a human has on not only the good or the bad situations but every situation in life. Once an individual understands the Buddhist definition of *karma*, then they can understand the importance of controlling one's mind and therefore their actions and speech [44]. Such mental control allowing good mental health can be maintained if one meditates and reflects upon their life. So, Buddhists can choose to understand that most thoughts are the result of excessive fears and worry and release them so that it does not develop into an anxiety disorder. When someone is depressed, one may feel like they are alone and helpless but in Buddhism one is encouraged to believe that despite the suffering, that one can get happiness and peace. Essentially, it is believed that suffering and pain are never permanent. There is also an emphasis on trusting oneself and one's abilities to recognize the depression or anxiety felt within and it is encouraged that one seeks proper medical care once this is recognized.

Surprisingly, in China, a religious or philosophical association was found to correlate with a much higher rate of suicide. Unlike India, the population of China that follows a religion or philosophy is only 10% [45] meaning that Buddhist beliefs are most likely put down in society and not considered valid. Buddhism attempts to clear one's mind and help them deal with mental illness symptoms but due to the small population following the religion/philosophy, it does not have a significant effect on mental illness treatment. This could also be because Buddhism does not take the substance abuse problem that is prevalent in China [45].

In the case of China, Buddhism does not seem to have a relation to the current available mental health care since it is followed by a relatively small portion of the population and even though meditation helps with mental illness recognition and treatment, it does not help the majority atheistic population. However, the Buddhist beliefs about mental health could be the reason why it has been predicted "At least 80% of patients suffering from depression will have access to treatment by 2030" [46].

Confucianism views of Mental Illness and Mental Health

Confucianism is an ancient Chinese philosophy/religion that is also followed by a generally small proportion of the Chinese population. Confucianism is more focused on holding back one's emotions before it leads to anxiety and depression, which are common mental disorders. Essentially saying that emotions should be felt but not displayed as it would affect others, and one should always be aware of those around and act accordingly [4]. It does have an emphasis on building one's character through learning,

thinking, and reflecting but in terms of becoming a better part of society. The concept of propriety, defined as “skillfulness in following social conventions such as etiquette and ritual” seems to further the mental illness stigma that exists in China, since mental illness symptoms both mild and extreme are seen as deviating from social conventions [4]. Propriety encourages conformity causing people to feel as though mental health is not as important as conforming to social conventions and standards.

As discussed in the Buddhism section, mental disorders are prevalent in the country but there is still a lack of proper treatment. In the “Background” section of the paper, it was stated that approximately 54 million people in China suffer from depression and about 41 million suffer from anxiety disorders. The stigma can be accredited to Confucianist views that think that a display of one’s emotions can lead to mental illness symptoms. Considering this is an ancient philosophy/religion, the deviance from society when someone experiences mental illness symptoms is most likely the cause of the lack of mental health care and the lack of research done concerning mental illness causes or effects. This is evident when it was found that there is a treatment gap of 91.8% of individuals not seeking help, most likely meaning that the Confucianist ideals have spread into societal ideals and now people are too scared to seek help, and thus less help is provided [47]. Confucianist views also look down upon working with those who are considered different in society and were not able to suppress their emotions. This contributes to there currently only being 1.24 psychiatrists per 100,000 people and 1.91 psychiatrist nurses per 100,000 people in China [47].

Conclusion

A complete conclusion cannot be drawn as correlation cannot prove causation, but multiple inferences can be made. The first one being that religions and philosophies, regardless of country, influence how society views mental illnesses and how strong the mental illness stigma is. With Hinduism, mental illness is a result of carelessness and a lack of faith. In Islam, it is seen in a similar manner in which a lack of faith is the reason for mental illness symptoms. In India, where both religions can be found, there is generally a lack of mental health care but a great prevalence of mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. In general, the treatment gap is from a lack of mental health care, which could be due to the larger population of India following Hinduism believing that mental illness can be resolved by rituals and meditation. Similarly, in China, a mental illness stigma exists which seems to stem from the ancient Confucianist view that not being able to control one’s emotions causes you to deviate from society and thus not being able to be proprietary. This correlates to the treatment gap of 91.8% of people with mental disorders not seeking help [47]. In Buddhism, we see that it also focuses on meditation, which is good for the mind, but it does not claim to replace treatment for mental illness. These Buddhist views could be the reason why China is currently working on mental health care and hopes to treat 80% of depression patients by 2030 [46]. This prediction is significant as China currently has a large treatment gap for mental illnesses in general and the actions taken to treat 80% of those

suffering from depression can be done for the treatment of other mental illnesses as well. Across the religions and philosophies investigated in both countries, it is evident that general deviance from the norms is the source of the stigma. Perhaps that general notion from both religions/philosophies within a country is what causes such a stigma to develop among those who follow religions or philosophies and in those who are atheistic.

These are simply relations and connections made between both religions/philosophies in both India and China and mental illness stigma and mental health care, but a definite conclusion or relation cannot be made since the connections show correlation and not causation.

The findings of this paper could inspire other studies of survey work so that proper data is developed in support of religious and philosophical beliefs being a cause of mental health stigma. The connections made could also help understand which communities need more education on the causes and effects of mental illness. An increase in such education would then encourage individuals to start programs within both India and China to provide proper mental health care that could incorporate religious and philosophical beliefs with Western medical care practices.

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