

## Social Psychiatry in Sri Lanka

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**Social Psychiatry in South Asia**

### Abstract

Sri Lanka's unique sociocultural milieu has been shaped by South Asian influences, mainly from India, as well as Western colonial legacies. Its social landscape continues to evolve with shifting cultural norms, changes in social class and structure, and the growing impact of social media. Although research on the social determinants of mental health is limited, existing epidemiological data indicate a high prevalence of mental health issues linked to factors such as poverty, lack of social protection, war-related trauma and displacement, gender inequality, and the marginalization of minority groups. Stigma, low mental health literacy, and cultural beliefs about mental illness continue to hinder service provision and access. Conversely, strong family and community support, religious coping mechanisms, and resilience serve as protective factors deeply embedded in Sri Lankan society. Mental health legislation remains out-dated, while recent policy recommendations face logistical and administrative challenges to implementation. Mental health services are still largely hospital-based, and the development of community-based services must be aligned with the strengths and opportunities of the existing healthcare system. There is a pressing need for more research to explore the relevance and application of social psychiatry in the Sri Lankan context and to inform culturally responsive mental health strategies.