



## The Live Love Laugh Foundation (TLLLF) Unveils Landmark Report on Public Perception Towards Mental Health in India

- *Report covering more than 3500 respondents across 8 Indian cities highlights importance of focused stigma-reduction programmes in mental health initiatives -*

**New Delhi, March 23, 2018:** ‘How India Perceives Mental Health,’ a report published by The Live Love Laugh Foundation (TLLLF) to gauge the public perception of mental health across 8 Indian cities has revealed that 87% of respondents associate mental illness with severe disorders (like schizophrenia and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) and their symptoms. Illustrating the poor understanding of the broad spectrum of mental illness, respondents were unlikely to associate mental illness with symptoms of more common mental disorders such as anxiety, when describing people with mental illness.

The survey also revealed high prevalence of stigma with 47% of people using the word “retard” to describe people with mental illness. Further, 60% of respondents believe that people with mental illness “should have their own groups to avoid contaminating healthy people” and 68% believe that they “should not be given any responsibility.” 60% believe that mental illness is caused by a “lack of self-discipline and willpower”.

The study has revealed three broad segments of people based on their attitudes towards mental illness:

- Segment 1 (27%) - Those who indicate support for people perceived as having mental illness. They would not discriminate against people with mental illness and predominantly believe that anyone can suffer from mental illness. This segment was seen predominantly in cities such as Kanpur, Patna and Delhi;
- Segment 2 (47%) - Those who are judgmental against people perceived as having a mental illness. This segment includes people who are more aware of mental illnesses and associated symptoms, but also display some stigma against people with mental illness. While the individuals in this segment sympathise with people with mental illness, they themselves would like to keep a safe distance. This segment was seen predominantly in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Kolkata;
- Segment 3 (26%): This group comprises individuals who display fear towards people perceived as having mental illness. This segment are “frightened of living in the same neighbourhood as and interacting with someone suffering from mental illness”. Bangalore and Pune were seen to have a larger representation from this segment.

The findings illustrate the often ignored, but, critical role of stigma-reduction programmes in addressing mental health.

**TLLLF 2018 National Survey Report:** ‘How India Perceives Mental Health,’ is the result of a five-month research project commissioned in July 2017 by TLLLF that covered 3,556 respondents across eight Indian cities. The report was released today by Shri Sanjeeva Kumar, Additional Secretary, Department of Health & Family Welfare, and Deepika Padukone, Founder - TLLLF, Anna Chandy, Chair of TLLLF’s Board of Trustees and Dr Shyam Bhat, Trustee - TLLLF.

Speaking at the launch, **Deepika Padukone, Founder, TLLLF** said, “This research initiative is part of our ongoing efforts to build a better understanding about mental health in our



country. Our research shows that only over a quarter of the respondents are willing to be supportive in many aspects, while the remaining are either judgmental or fearful of those affected with mental illness. This is an extremely unfortunate situation for us to be in. It is absolutely critical that we as a society work together towards increasing awareness, reducing stigma and normalizing the need to seek support for mental illness”.

**Anna Chandy, Chairperson - The Board of Trustees at TLLLF**, said: “Traditionally and historically, India is a collectivistic society, now slowly moving towards a more individualistic one. This transition is evident in the data presented in the report. In larger cities, we see a more dramatic shift towards individualism, possibly due to an increase in the amount of access to information and migrant need for survival. However, smaller cities like Kanpur and Patna seem to retain some of their collectivistic roots, and are moving towards an individualistic society at a slower pace.”

Noting that mental health had to be looked at holistically, she said, “Focussing both on decreasing stigma and increasing awareness is the key. By inculcating collectivist practices into our more individualistic lifestyles we can shape the conversation to build an inclusive society to a) provide support to people with mental illness; and b) Increase India’s awareness about mental health concerns”.

#### **Key highlights of the report:**

- Approximately 1 in 2 people associate “being healthy” to “Happiness”
- Approximately 1 in 2 people link “being healthy” with “having a sound/healthy mind’
- However, almost half of the participants used words such as ‘Retard’ or ‘Crazy/Mad/Stupid’ while describing people with mental illness.
  - 92% of respondents believe that people with Mental Illness should visit a specialist doctor.
  - Nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents also believe that mental illness can be treated with medication and counselling.
- Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents believe that that people with mental illness should not be given any responsibility
- 6 out of 10 individuals believe that mental illness is caused by a lack of self-discipline and willpower.
- 6 out of 10 individuals are also likely to believe that people with mental illness should have their own groups to “avoid contamination”
- Approximately 8 out of 10 individuals show sympathy towards people with mental illness; however, only 6 out of 10 show empathy.
- Approximately 1 in 4 individuals exhibit apathy/indifference to people with mental illness.
- A little more than half of the participants express fear at least sometimes, towards people with mental illness.
- Approximately 7 out of 10 individuals believe that:
  - Society has the responsibility of providing the best possible care to people with mental illness.
  - The best therapy for people with mental illness is to be a part of the everyday community
  - They would recommend visiting a mental health professional to a friend struggling with mental illness.
- Approximately 1 in 2 people are very likely to visit a doctor to discuss mental health.



Market research agency, Kantar Public, undertook the research for the study on behalf of TLLLF.

The release of the report was followed by a panel discussion on the findings, moderated by Dr Shyam Bhat MD, Trustee - TLLLF. Panelists at the discussion included Anna Chandy (TLLLF), Dr Soumitra Pathare (Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy at the Indian Law Society, Pune) and Siddharta Swarup (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation).

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### **Background:**

[The Live Love Laugh Foundation](#) (TLLLF) was set up in 2015 as a Charitable Trust to champion the cause of mental health in India, with a focus on depression, stress and anxiety. The main aim of TLLLF is to reduce stigma and increase awareness around mental health.

Since inception TLLLF has undertaken landmark initiatives such as the launch of the award-winning #DobaraPoocho - India's first nationwide public awareness campaign on mental health, and several on-ground activities such as mental health awareness programs for school students and teachers which has already reached approximately 65,000 students and 11,450 teachers across six Indian states; a sensitization program on mental health for doctors that has covered 2500 physicians; and a rural mental health programme in Davangere district in Karnataka providing free psychiatric treatment for approximately 800 individuals. In addition, TLLLF undertakes awareness programmes through engagement on social media and outreach via print, TV, radio and digital media outlets.

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