

Editorial

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Welcome to the third issue of 2023! It is a pleasure to introduce this regular issue aiming to illustrate the truly international scope and interest of our Journal. Human rights in health and social care constitute a matter of analysis, research, policy development and evaluation not only within our given national context but also internationally. It is when we are able to look at progress, gaps and good practices elsewhere that we get to understand the challenges or indeed fortunes that we may be experiencing at home.

Therefore, for this issue I focused on selecting seven papers covering human rights developments and challenges in health and social care in *Pakistan, Karnataka, Philippine, Malaysia, Russia* and the *UK*. While the themes that they cover and the research methodologies that they adopted vary, collectively they present a global picture that is necessary for academia, practice and policy development.

Starting with a comparative paper “*Russian and UK dementia action plans: a comparative analysis*”, the authors engage in a timely legal and policy analysis of two national programmes paying attention to their human rights implications. As with all strategy governmental initiatives what really matters is their impact on real life and manifestation. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the findings of this paper is that the practical implementation of the Russian and UK plans differs. Whilst the Russian action plan on dementia is advisory in nature and does not propose specific programmes for funding, the UK plan takes matter a lot further through tangible steps and timelines. Moreover, the paper points out the different approach that the papers have regarding the role of education and the risk factors associated with dementia. It is also useful to observe the research limitations of this paper, which acknowledges that the lack of information on Russian regional strategies does not allow to truly compare the differences between two countries. All in all, this comparative study illustrates several weak points in the UK and Russian dementia policies, which should be addressed to tackle the dementia problem in the examined countries and beyond.

Moving on to “*A Hindrance to Proper Health Care: Psychometric Development and Validation of Opiophobia Questionnaire Among Doctors in Pakistan*”, the authors argue that getting treatment for acute and chronic pain is a basic human right and that opioid analgesics is one way to achieve this. However, as the paper argues, due to the prevalence of opiophobia, many doctors avoid prescribing opioid-based medicines, even at the cost of patients suffering leading to a hindrance in providing optimal health care. It is true that currently there is no reliable and valid instrument to measure the severity of opiophobia in doctors. For this reason, this timely paper presents a precise and reliable instrument for measuring opiophobia. It also moves on to validate it with a sample of doctors from Pakistan. To construct this innovative instrument, the authors interviewed 100 doctors from various hospitals, treating patients with chronic pain, in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Arguably, the proposed instrument can be immensely effective in identifying doctors who have concerns and fears about prescribing opioids to patients with chronic pain. The findings acquired on such a scale can help in developing appropriate academic and psychological interventions which can help such doctors to overcome their opiophobia. Moreover, researchers can equally benefit from the instrument as it can enable them to investigate opiophobia with other

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possible variables. The results, instrument and scale that are presented in this paper can have considerable social implications internationally.

The third paper, “Articulating Key Obligations of States to Persons Deprived of Liberty under a Right to Health Framework: The Philippine Case Study” takes us back to the Covid19 restrictions and their impact on human rights. Using the case study approach, the paper describes the state of health in places of detention in the *Philippines* during the pandemic, with an end view of providing granular recommendations for prison policy reform. To this end, international human rights law relating to places of detention were thematically analysed to articulate the scope of prisoners’ right to health. Key concerns that were highlighted by the researchers included: increase in the number of infections, vulnerabilities in physical and mental health, and the spread of infection among correctional staff. Long-standing structural constraints and limited health information compound the threat of COVID-19. The paper concludes that the Philippines must comply with its human rights obligations to its prisoners especially within the contest of COVID-19. Of course, this conclusion and the related findings and recommendations can be extended in other countries and jurisdictions, where prisoners continue to suffer restrictions that are beyond those imposed on them by courts due to their crimes.

“From Accident to Hospital: Measuring Inequality in Pre-Hospital Emergency Services in a City in the North of *Iran*” investigates the timeliness, means and manner in which patients arrive in hospitals for emergency support. In particular, the paper investigates inequality in arrival time of emergent traffic accident patients to the hospital in 2018–2019 in a city in the North of Iran. To make this assessment the authors extracted data from the Guilan province trauma system databank in Poursina Hospital in Rasht in 2018 and 2019. The Gini coefficient was used to calculate inequality and a regression model was estimated for determining the reason for inequality in time to receive hospital services. It is refreshing to read that the study showed that patients’ arrival time from the time of the accident to the time of arrival at the hospital was good and there were no serious concerns regarding inequality between those who had their own means of transportation and patience relying on emergency services to reach hospital.

The fifth paper “Safeguarding the rights and welfare of the health-care workers amid the pandemic: a social protection approach” takes us to *Malaysia* to examine its labour market policy, social insurance and social assistance for safeguarding the rights and welfare of frontline health-care workers (HCWs). The authors highlight the significance of initiating and empowering *ad hoc* approaches through the social protection system for the practical and effective protection of frontline HCWs. The authors remind us that these workers formed the backbone of the Malaysian nation during the pandemic and therefore the practical needs and approaches that are pointed out by the research are pivotal.

“Menstrual Knowledge and Perceptions of Schoolgirls in *Bangladesh*: Do Socio-Economic Factors Really Matter?” explores whether socio-economic factors determine the level of menstrual knowledge and perceptions of schoolgirls. Amongst other things, the authors help us grasp how knowledge and perceptions vary with variations in the different socio-economic factors in a schoolgirl’s life such as place of residence, religion, age, grade, parents’ education, parents’ occupation, family income and even family size. To create their evidence-base, the paper collected data from four schools (two in urban areas and two in rural areas). A total of 450 schoolgirls were interviewed and multiple logistic regression models were used to measure the associations between various socio-economic variables and perceptions of and knowledge about menstruation. Interestingly, school girls from urban areas were 4.75 times more likely to report higher levels of knowledge about menstruation compared to their counterparts. Based on the father’s occupation, respondents whose father was engaged in a professional occupation were 1.983 times more likely to have a higher level of knowledge on menstruation compared to those whose fathers were in an unskilled profession. In summary, the paper provides evidence that different socio-economic and even demographic factors

are important in the development of menstrual knowledge and perceptions. Policy formulation and development actions related to adolescent girls' physical and reproductive health development need to consider these factors in Bangladesh and in other developing countries.

Finally, "A Narrative Study on the Psycho-Social Impact of Sex Trafficking on Victims' Parents in the State of *Karnataka*" explores the life victims' parents. The authors applied the method of narrative inquiry working with three pairs of parents from two cities: Mysore and Bangalore. They collected their original data through in-depth face-to-face interviews, informal conversations, photographs and field notes. Amongst other things, they found that sex trafficking victims' parents were living an isolated and socially alienated life with potential symptoms of behavioural, cognitive and emotional disorders. Shockingly, the authors also revealed that the parents they worked with felt that their fundamental right to dignity and respect were violated by the state and others. Surprisingly and indeed sadly the interviewed parents did not mention any substantial efforts undertaken by non-governmental organisations in reintegrating them within their communities, or indeed supporting them. The participating parents also appear to have been unattended by therapists, social work practitioners and policymakers alike. This timely paper makes an important contribution to the qualitative literature by providing narrative evidence, which will lead to better policymaking and designing effective support services for sex trafficking victims' parents.

I hope that you find this issue useful in your practice and research. Your feedback is always welcome; you can submit your views via our website as well as your work for peer review and publication at www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/journal/ijhrh?id=IJHRH#author-guidelines. We review papers on an ongoing basis and have a target of returning them to the author within – five to eight weeks of receipt. Warm wishes from everyone at the *IJHRH* and stay safe!