

The disadvantaged community that I have chosen to analyze with regards to mental health needs is indigenous women living in remote areas of Australia. Indigenous women comprise those belonging to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander group, and these women are known to have lower health status as compared to other women (Fredericks et al., 2010). Some of the major reasons for their poor health include dispossession, racism, history of violence, forced removal from family, and marginalization (Department of Health and Ageing, 2010). As per the 2011 Australian Census, only 22% of Indigenous women have had a school education and only 39% of these women are employed (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). This community faces a generally lower level of education and literacy level making them unable to compete and participate equally in the workforce. Consequentially, this leads to lower financial status making it very difficult for them to access quality healthcare services.

Considering the various atrocities faced by indigenous women since centuries, their overall emotional and mental health continues to be poor. Mental health is dictated by a combination of several internal and external factors, and mental illness is characterized by cognitive impairment and decreased social and emotional functioning. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) conducted in 2008 revealed that the indigenous population was 2.6 times more likely to undergo psychological distress. Comparing the levels of distress between indigenous men and women, indigenous women were 35% more likely to be distressed as compared with 28% of indigenous men.

An important strength of the population of indigenous women is their younger age as compared to non-indigenous women. It has been estimated that around 45% of indigenous girls were less than 20 years of age, and only 3.8% of indigenous women were over 65 years of age. In the non-indigenous group, these numbers are 24% and 15.2% respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). This shows that, generally speaking, the population of indigneous women is younger as compared to non-indigenous women.