

Mental Health and Well-Being

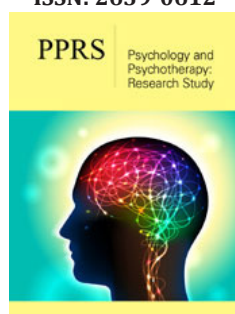
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Abstract

Mental health and well-being are vital dimensions of overall health, influencing how individuals think, feel, relate, and function in daily life. Well-being goes beyond the absence of illness and includes components such as emotional balance, psychological resilience, social connectedness, a sense of purpose, and the ability to cope with stress and adversity. When compromised, mental health challenges can emerge in different forms, ranging from anxiety disorders, depression, and stress-related conditions to more severe illnesses such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Poor mental well-being whether or not accompanied by diagnosable illness is linked to chronic physical conditions, substance abuse, absenteeism, reduced productivity, and diminished quality of life. Stigma remains one of the greatest barriers, silencing individuals, discouraging help-seeking, and perpetuating misconceptions about mental illness. Addressing stigma while promoting resilience, mindfulness, self-care, and preventative interventions is essential for fostering healthier individuals and communities. This article emphasizes the multidimensional nature of mental health, highlights the interplay between well-being and illness, and underscores the importance of collaborative efforts among individuals, families, institutions, and policymakers to sustain mental health and well-being as central to quality of life and societal development.

Keywords: Mental health; Well-being; Resilience; Stigma; Mental illness; Psychological health; Self-care; Mindfulness; Prevention; Community

Introduction

The mental health of students and educators has become a pressing concern. Academic pressure, social isolation, and anxiety are some of the challenges that can affect the overall well-being of those involved in education. Ruggeri, et al. [1] emphasizes that mental well-being goes beyond the absence of illness and is crucial for success in various aspects of life. Mental well-being is about having fulfilling relationships, utilizing strengths, contributing to community and being resilient, which is the ability to bounce back after setbacks. Mental well-being is a core ingredient for success in school, work, health, and community life. Poor mental well-being, with or without the presence of mental illness, is a risk factor for: chronic disease (cardiovascular, arthritis), increased health care utilization, missed days of work, suicide ideation and attempts, death, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, physical inactivity, injury, delinquency, and crime Keyes [2]. Walter, et al. [3] opines, that mental health encompasses cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, and psychological well-being, and it affects how individuals think, feel, behave, and handle stress. Edwards, et al. [4] focuses on the mental health and psychological well-being of management students and educators, highlighting the importance of coping with stress, enjoying life, and fulfilling one's potential. Overall, these papers emphasize the significance of mental health and well-being in individuals' lives and their impact on various outcomes. Mental health and well-being are crucial aspects of an individual's overall health and quality of life. They encompass a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Here are some key points to consider include, mental health, mental illness, well-being, stigma, preventative measures, treatment, self-care, self-

care, mental health at work, mental health awareness, resilience, mindfulness and meditation, seeking help, crisis intervention, and education.

Mental Health

Mental health refers to cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. It involves the ability to manage stress, maintain fulfilling relationships, work productively, and make informed choices. Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It encompasses a wide range of aspects related to the functioning of the mind and one's ability to cope with stress, maintain healthy relationships, work productively, and make informed decisions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" Quijada, et al. [5]. It is the state of emotional wellbeing by the virtue of which an individual is in harmony with himself and the society. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." 1 It is the state of emotional wellbeing by the virtue of which an individual is in harmony with himself and the society Uppal [6]. Good mental health is not just the absence of mental illnesses but also the presence of positive traits like resilience, emotional stability, and a sense of well-being Matsayi [7].

Key aspects of mental health include:

- A. Emotional well-being:** The ability to understand, manage, and express one's emotions in a healthy way is crucial for mental health. This includes being in touch with one's feelings and having emotional resilience.
- B. Psychological well-being:** A person's psychological well-being involves their perception of life, personal growth, and the realization of their potential. It includes self-acceptance, autonomy, and a sense of purpose in life.
- C. Social well-being:** Healthy relationships and a supportive social network are vital for mental health. Positive interactions with family, friends, and the community contribute to one's overall well-being.
- D. Coping skills:** Effective coping mechanisms are essential to manage stress, adversity, and life's challenges. Healthy coping strategies can help prevent the development of mental health issues.
- E. Self-esteem:** A positive self-image and self-confidence are important components of mental health. High self-esteem is associated with better mental well-being.
- F. Resilience:** The ability to bounce back from setbacks and adapt to changing circumstances is a crucial component of mental health. Resilient individuals can better handle stress and adversity.

G. Balanced lifestyle: Eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, and getting adequate sleep all play a role in maintaining good mental health. Substance abuse and poor lifestyle choices can have negative effects.

H. Seeking help: It's important to recognize when you need help and seek it when necessary. Mental health professionals, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and counsellors, can provide support and treatment for mental health issues.

Well-Being

Well-being is a broader concept that encompasses mental, emotional, and physical health. It relates to a person's overall quality of life and their ability to thrive and flourish. Well-being refers to a state of overall health, happiness, and prosperity. It encompasses various aspects of an individual's life, including physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being Matsayi, et al. [8]. Achieving a high level of well-being involves taking care of various dimensions of your life and experiencing a sense of contentment and fulfilment. Lin [9,10] describes well-being as a multidimensional concept that involves self-awareness, self-adjustment, creativity, and sensitivity. Eisele (2020) challenges the traditional two-dimensional model of well-being and emphasizes the importance of psychological well-being and social well-being. Zenarolla (2014) highlights the significance of well-being in addressing health inequalities and promoting social cohesion. This suggests that well-being is a complex and multidimensional concept that encompasses various aspects of human existence, including cognitive, emotional, functional, and social dimensions.

Components of well-being

- A. Physical well-being:** This aspect focuses on your physical health and fitness. It involves maintaining a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, and taking care of your body to prevent illness and promote longevity.
- B. Mental well-being:** Mental well-being is about having a healthy mind. This includes managing stress, practicing mindfulness, and seeking help when dealing with mental health issues. A positive mindset, emotional resilience, and cognitive function are also key components of mental well-being.
- C. Emotional well-being:** Emotional well-being relates to your ability to manage and express your emotions in a healthy way. It involves self-awareness, self-regulation, and building positive relationships. It's about feeling in control of your emotions and being able to cope with life's ups and downs.
- D. Social well-being:** Social well-being pertains to the quality of your social connections and relationships. Maintaining meaningful relationships, having a support system, and engaging in social activities are essential for social well-being. Loneliness and isolation can have a negative impact on this dimension.
- E. Financial well-being:** Financial well-being is related to your economic stability and security. It involves managing your

finances effectively, saving for the future, and being free from excessive financial stress.

F. Environmental well-being: This aspect is about the quality of your surroundings and your relationship with the environment. Living in a clean, safe, and sustainable environment can contribute to your overall well-being.

G. Spiritual well-being: Spiritual well-being is unique to each individual and relates to one's sense of purpose, values, and beliefs. It can encompass religious or philosophical beliefs and practices, as well as a sense of inner peace and connection to something greater than oneself.

H. Occupational well-being: Occupational well-being focuses on your satisfaction and fulfilment in your work or career. Finding meaning and purpose in your professional life can have a significant impact on overall well-being.

I. Intellectual well-being: Intellectual well-being involves continuing to learn and engage in intellectual activities that stimulate your mind. Lifelong learning, pursuing hobbies, and challenging yourself intellectually contribute to this aspect of well-being.

J. Cultural well-being: Cultural well-being relates to your connection with your cultural identity and heritage. Feeling a sense of belonging and pride in your cultural background can enhance overall well-being.

Well-being is a holistic concept, and different individuals may prioritize these dimensions differently. Achieving well-being often involves a balance between these various aspects of life. It's a dynamic and ongoing process that requires self-awareness, self-care, and the ability to adapt to life's changes and challenges.

Mental Illness

Mental illness includes a range of conditions that affect a person's thinking, mood, behaviour, and daily functioning. Tabassum (2020) defines mental illness as a range of conditions that involve changes in thinking, emotions, behaviour, and relationships. Newton (2007) emphasizes that mental illness is a medically diagnosable condition that impairs cognitive, affective, or relational abilities. Harvey (2017) adds that mental illness is characterized by disturbances in thought, mood, behaviour, and perception. These disturbances can include conditions such as schizophrenia, depression, and disorders related to drug abuse. Common mental illnesses include depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and eating disorders. Mental illness, also known as mental health disorders or psychiatric disorders, refers to a range of conditions that affect a person's thoughts, emotions, behaviour, or a combination of these. These conditions can be temporary or chronic and can significantly impact a person's daily life, relationships, and overall well-being.

Types of Mental Illnesses

The types of mental illnesses include:

A. Depression: Characterized by persistent sadness, loss of interest in activities, and a range of physical and emotional

symptoms. Major depressive disorder is one of the most prevalent mental health conditions.

B. Anxiety disorders: These include conditions like generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and specific phobias. People with these disorders often experience excessive worry, fear, or nervousness.

C. Bipolar disorder: A mood disorder characterized by extreme mood swings, including periods of depression and manic or hypomanic episodes.

D. Schizophrenia: A severe and chronic mental disorder that affects a person's thinking, emotions, and behaviour. It often involves symptoms like hallucinations and delusions.

E. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD): Marked by persistent, unwanted, and distressing thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviours or mental acts (compulsions) to alleviate the anxiety.

F. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): Occurs in response to a traumatic event and is characterized by symptoms like flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety.

G. Eating disorders: Conditions such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder involve problematic eating behaviours and distorted body image.

H. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): A neurodevelopmental disorder that affects attention, impulse control, and hyperactivity, often diagnosed in childhood but can persist into adulthood.

I. Borderline personality disorder: Characterized by unstable relationships, self-image, and emotions, often leading to impulsive behaviour and intense mood swings.

J. Substance use disorders: Conditions related to the misuse of drugs or alcohol, which can lead to addiction and have a significant impact on mental health.

Stigma

There is often a stigma associated with mental illness, which can make it difficult for individuals to seek help or openly discuss their struggles. Reducing stigma is an important step in improving mental health awareness. Stigma refers to the negative beliefs, attitudes, and stereotypes that society attaches to certain individuals or groups based on their characteristics, behaviours, or circumstances. Byrne (2009) emphasizes that stigma is a prejudice based on stereotypes that leads to discrimination, affecting individuals with mental health problems and contributing to further morbidity and status loss. Williamson (2014) discusses stigma as a social mechanism that discredits individuals and reduces social status, with potential negative impacts on health and identity. Kreiner (2020) explores how stigma can affect individual identities within organizations, emphasizing the consequences and potential strategies to counteract stigma at work. Stigmatization can lead to discrimination, social exclusion, and harm to the individuals or groups who are stigmatized. Stigma can be directed at various

aspects of a person's identity or situation, including:

- A. Mental health stigma:** People with mental health conditions often face stigma, which can discourage them from seeking help and support. This can perpetuate mental health issues and make it harder for individuals to recover.
- B. HIV/AIDS stigma:** Historically, people with HIV/AIDS have faced significant stigma and discrimination. Misconceptions and fear of transmission have contributed to this stigma.
- C. Substance use stigma:** Individuals with substance use disorders are often stigmatized, which can make it challenging for them to access treatment and support.
- D. Disability stigma:** People with disabilities may face social stigma that can limit their opportunities and participation in society.
- E. Obesity stigma:** Weight-based discrimination and stigma can affect individuals' self-esteem and mental health.
- F. Racial and ethnic stigma:** People from minority racial or ethnic groups may experience discrimination and stereotypes based on their ethnicity, which can limit their opportunities and lead to social inequalities.
- G. Sexual orientation and gender identity stigma:** LGBTQ+ individuals often face stigma and discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- H. Criminal record stigma:** Individuals with a criminal record may face stigma, making it challenging for them to find employment and reintegrate into society after serving time in prison.

Stigma is harmful because it can lead to social exclusion, discrimination, and a lack of opportunities for those who are stigmatized. It can also deter individuals from seeking the help they need, such as medical treatment or mental health support, due to the fear of being labelled or mistreated. Efforts to combat stigma include public awareness campaigns, education, and advocacy to change negative attitudes and stereotypes, as well as promoting inclusivity and acceptance in society.

Strategies for Promoting and Preserving Good Mental Health

Maintaining good mental health involves various preventative measures. These can include regular exercise, a balanced diet, sufficient sleep, stress management, and a supportive social network. Maintaining good mental health is crucial for overall well-being and involves a combination of preventative measures and proactive self-care. Arumugam (2019) discusses the identification and control of risk factors, as well as the promotion of positive mental health through various determinants and protective factors. Mukhopadhyay (2019) highlights the dimensions of mental health, including preservation, prevention, remedy, and development, and emphasizes the need for necessary skills to reduce the occurrence of mental health problems. Soddy (1961) emphasizes the significance

of preventive mental hygiene in improving overall mental health, drawing from the history of medicine. Saxena (2006) discusses the effectiveness of interventions in reducing risk factors, increasing protective factors, and preventing mental disorders, emphasizing the role of macro-policy interventions and individual support. Some key strategies for promoting and preserving good mental health include:

- A. Regular exercise:** Physical activity has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Regular exercise can release endorphins, which are natural mood lifters. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week.
- B. Balanced diet:** A nutritious diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats can provide essential nutrients that support brain function and mental well-being.
- C. Adequate sleep:** Quality sleep is essential for mental health. Aim for 7-9 hours of restful sleep each night. Poor sleep can exacerbate stress and emotional instability.
- D. Stress management:** Stress is a natural part of life, but chronic stress can harm your mental health. Practice stress-reduction techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, or mindfulness to manage stress effectively.
- E. Social connections:** Maintain and nurture your social connections. Spending time with loved ones, friends, and colleagues can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation.
- F. Positive self-talk:** Challenge and reframe negative thoughts. Cognitive-behavioural techniques can help you develop a more positive and resilient mindset.
- G. Set realistic goals:** Break your goals into manageable, achievable steps. This can prevent you from feeling overwhelmed and anxious.
- H. Time management:** Effective time management can reduce stress. Prioritize tasks and create a daily schedule that balances work, relaxation, and social activities.
- I. Limit substance use:** Excessive alcohol, drug, or caffeine consumption can negatively impact mental health. Be mindful of your substance use and seek help if needed.
- J. Seek professional help:** If you are struggling with mental health issues, don't hesitate to seek the assistance of a mental health professional, such as a therapist, counsellor, or psychiatrist. Early intervention is often the key to successful treatment.
- K. Cultivate hobbies and interests:** Engaging in hobbies and interests that bring you joy can act as a form of self-care, providing you with a sense of purpose and satisfaction.
- L. Learn to Say No:** Overcommitting can lead to stress and burnout. Setting boundaries and learning to say no when necessary is important for your mental well-being.

M. Practice mindfulness and meditation: These techniques can help you stay in the present moment, reduce rumination, and manage stress more effectively.

N. Self-compassion: Be kind and forgiving toward yourself. Avoid self-criticism and practice self-compassion in times of difficulty.

O. Stay informed: Educate yourself about mental health, its signs and symptoms, and the resources available for support. Reducing the stigma surrounding mental health issues is essential for a healthier society.

Common Treatment Options for Mental Health Issues

When mental health issues arise, treatment options are available. These may include therapy (such as cognitive-behavioural therapy), medication, or a combination of both. Gallagher (2014) discusses the range of treatment options such as hospitalization, community mental health centres, talk therapy, group therapy, and medication. Osmond 1961 emphasizes the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural therapy and medications in treating depression. Dunner (2000) explores different psychotherapies like Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT), as well as various medications for depression. Patel (2018) emphasizes that most mental health problems can be effectively treated, and that general health workers can provide treatment with the right knowledge and approach. In summary, these papers collectively support the idea that when mental health issues arise, treatment options such as therapy (including cognitive-behavioural therapy) and medication are available (Gallagher 2014; Osmond 1961; Dunner 2000; Patel 2018).

Early intervention is crucial for better outcomes. Yes, when mental health issues arise, there are various treatment options available to help individuals manage and improve their mental well-being. The choice of treatment depends on the specific condition, its severity, and the individual's preferences. Some common treatment options for mental health issues include:

A. Psychotherapy (Talk Therapy): Psychotherapy involves talking to a trained mental health professional, such as a psychologist or therapist. Different forms of psychotherapy, like Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dialectical-Behaviour Therapy (DBT), and Interpersonal Therapy (IPT), can be effective for various mental health conditions.

B. Medication: Medications can be prescribed to manage symptoms of certain mental health conditions. For example, antidepressants, antianxiety drugs, mood stabilizers, and antipsychotic medications may be used, often in combination with psychotherapy.

C. Support groups: Support groups bring together individuals facing similar mental health challenges. Sharing experiences and coping strategies with peers can be highly beneficial.

D. Lifestyle changes: Making healthy lifestyle changes, such

as regular exercise, a balanced diet, adequate sleep, and stress management techniques, can have a positive impact on mental health.

E. Hospitalization or inpatient treatment: For severe cases or when there's a risk of harm to oneself or others, hospitalization in a psychiatric facility may be necessary.

F. Alternative therapies: Some individuals find relief through complementary and alternative treatments, such as acupuncture, yoga, meditation, or art therapy.

G. Self-help and self-care: Learning about one's condition and practicing self-care can be essential for managing mental health issues. Techniques like journaling, mindfulness, and relaxation exercises can be useful.

H. Teletherapy: Online therapy or telehealth services have become more accessible, allowing individuals to receive therapy and support remotely, which can be particularly helpful for those with limited access to in-person care.

I. Peer and family support: Having a strong support system of friends and family can be invaluable. Education and support for loved ones are also crucial for understanding and assisting individuals with mental health challenges.

Self-Care

Practicing self-care is essential for maintaining mental well-being. This includes setting boundaries, managing stress, engaging in activities that bring joy, and prioritizing one's own needs. Absolutely, practicing self-care is crucial for maintaining and promoting mental well-being. Self-care refers to the deliberate actions individuals take to care for their physical, emotional, and psychological health. It's a proactive approach to maintaining balance in one's life, reducing stress, and enhancing overall well-being.

Reasons Why Self-Care is Essential for Mental Well-Being

Reasons why self-care is essential for mental well-being

Self-care is essential for mental well-being because of the following reasons:

A. Stress Reduction: Engaging in self-care activities can help reduce stress. Stress can have a detrimental impact on mental health, leading to anxiety and depression. Self-care practices, such as relaxation techniques, mindfulness, or hobbies, can help alleviate stress and its associated symptoms.

B. Emotional Regulation: Self-care provides individuals with the tools to better manage their emotions. It can help in recognizing and addressing negative feelings and promoting emotional resilience.

C. Improved Self-Esteem: Taking time for self-care can boost self-esteem and self-worth. It helps individuals recognize their own value and prioritize their needs and wants.

D. Enhanced Resilience: Self-care routines, such as regular exercise and a balanced diet, can improve physical health.

When the body is in good shape, it's more resilient to the effects of stress and better equipped to handle life's challenges.

E. Prevention of Burnout: Consistent self-care can help prevent burnout, which is often associated with high levels of stress and overwork. By setting boundaries and making self-care a priority, individuals can sustain their mental well-being in demanding situations.

F. Better Relationships: Self-care can also have a positive impact on interpersonal relationships. When individuals take care of their own needs and well-being, they are often better able to support and connect with others in a healthy way.

G. Increased Self-Awareness: Engaging in self-care activities, such as journaling or meditation, can promote self-awareness. Understanding one's own needs and triggers is vital for managing mental health effectively.

H. Boosted Creativity and Productivity: Self-care practices can rejuvenate the mind and boost creativity and productivity. Taking breaks, engaging in hobbies, or simply resting can lead to increased focus and better problem-solving abilities.

I. Prevention of Mental Health Issues: Regular self-care can help prevent the onset of mental health issues or manage existing conditions. It's an essential component of overall mental health maintenance.

Self-care is a personalized endeavour, as different activities and practices work for different people. Some common self-care strategies include exercise, meditation, mindfulness, spending time with loved ones, enjoying hobbies, practicing relaxation techniques, and seeking professional help when needed. It's important to make self-care a regular part of your routine, as consistent self-care is most effective in promoting mental well-being.

12. Pillars of Mental Well-being: From Awareness to Action

The pillars of mental well-being include the following:

A. Community Support: Having a strong support network is critical. Friends, family, and community resources can provide emotional support and help individuals in times of need.

B. Mental Health at Work: Employers have a role to play in promoting mental health in the workplace. This includes creating a supportive environment, offering employee assistance programs, and reducing work-related stressors.

C. Mental Health Awareness: Raising awareness about mental health issues is vital. Initiatives like Mental Health Awareness Month and World Mental Health Day help reduce stigma and promote understanding.

D. Resilience: Building emotional resilience can help individuals cope with life's challenges. This involves developing the ability to adapt to adversity and bounce back from setbacks.

E. Mindfulness and Meditation: Practices like mindfulness and meditation can improve mental well-being. They help

individuals stay present, reduce stress, and manage their thoughts and emotions.

F. Seeking Help: It's crucial to seek help when needed. Mental health professionals, such as therapists, counsellors, and psychiatrists, can provide support, guidance, and treatment.

G. Crisis Intervention: In cases of severe mental health crises or suicidal thoughts, immediate intervention is necessary. Hotlines and crisis centres are available for those in need.

H. Education: Education about mental health and well-being should start early in schools. Teaching children and adolescents about emotional intelligence and coping skills can have a long-lasting impact.

Conclusion

Remember that mental health and well-being are ongoing processes. It's essential to prioritize them in your life and seek help if you or someone you know is struggling. Additionally, supporting mental health initiatives and reducing stigma on a societal level can have a profound impact on the well-being of individuals and communities. These contemporary educational issues require ongoing attention, research, and innovative solutions to ensure that education systems can effectively prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. Addressing these challenges often involves collaboration between educators, policymakers, and communities to find solutions that improve the quality and accessibility of education.

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