

Review of “Understanding Emotional Health vis-à-vis Mental Health: Perspectives for a Holistic Approach to a Healthy Personality”

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ABSTRACT

The present article is a review of the published article, “Understanding Emotional Health vis-à-vis Mental Health: Perspectives for a holistic approach to a healthy personality”. After a working summary of the published article, the review traces the other studies done which are related to this article and its subject matter, emotional health, after the date of publication, by way of recent developments. The role of emotion regulation and affect regulation, and recent strategies proposed for promotion of emotional health are pointed out, as in continuation with the theme of the article. As a scope for future research in the field, the review draws attention to the recent trends in considering the spiritual and socio-economic dimensions as related to emotional health towards promoting a holistic personality.

Keywords: Review, Emotional Health, Mental Health, Holistic approach, Healthy Personality

INTRODUCTION

Jennifer et al. [1] Emotional Health as a concept has not been studied much as compared to mental health. The article in review elaborates on the significance of emotional health for a holistic wellbeing. Emotional health is not to be seen as a sub-domain of mental health but a perspective in itself for overall wellbeing, without which a comprehensive mental health cannot be attained. In the initial part of the article, emotions in general and its centrality in one’s life is described along with the role of positive emotions in the wellbeing of persons. Drawing attention to the direct relationship between emotional health and holistic wellbeing of a person, the article critiques the fact that the concepts emotional health and mental health are referred to as if they were interchangeable. The major part of the article goes to substantiate this fact, as the two concepts are explained in detail and in comparison. The present review focuses particularly on this element and looks for the essential contributions of the article and some inspirations for further study from it, in the field of psychological research.

THE ARTICLE IN REFERENCE – A WORKING SUMMARY

A brief summary of the article in review would be in place right at the outset. The article presupposes that an Emotional Health approach is a more person-centered approach in contrast to a mental health approach that stresses excessively

on disorders and their treatment. It underlines the subject of physical wellbeing, emotional development and emotional adjustment in various studies [2,3] the use of the term emotional health by D.H. Scott in his studies in 1951 [4], the term, normality [5] and emotional intelligence by Goleman in 1995 [6] by way of tracing the historical emergence of the concept. The article however points out that a scientific definition of the term “Emotional Health” is still lacking and attempts to address that lack to a certain extent. Projects, researches and workshops exploring the meaning and factors of emotional health are referred to and the paucity in the literature pertaining to the concept is pointed out. Explaining that Emotional Health is more than mere high levels of self-confidence or self-esteem, the article stresses on the capacity of an individual to accept oneself despite encountering setbacks in life, as an essential indicator of emotional health. From the prolific studies and literature available on mental

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health, the article points out the underlying emotional components, and the role played by emotions within the ambit of mental health observing that coping with the stressors of everyday life is essential for good emotional health and contributes to good mental health.

Emphasizing the relationship between mind and emotion, the article argues that emotions influence one's thought and hence the emotional and mental aspects of one's behaviour are interconnected. Various evidences are made to prove the importance of emotional health over mental health. While mental health deals with having a mental health condition or particular disorders as specified in DSM-V or ICD-10, emotional health is applicable to all whether the person has a mental health condition or not. A shift in the understanding of mental health from mental illness or psychiatric disorder [7] to abnormalities in emotional, behaviour or social relationships [8], to wellbeing and internal equilibrium [9] is described.

The article highlights a change in perspective of how one views emotional or psychological wellbeing. Mental health has a strong emotional basis and emotional health is essential for a holistic personality. Claims are made that the concept of emotional health has an overarching perspective within which Mental Health can be addressed too. Helping an individual focus on good emotional health can have a more person centered approach than problem centered vision and result in an optimal functioning, self-acceptance and enhanced interpersonal relationships.

FURTHER INDICATIONS ON EMOTIONAL HEALTH

In line with the authors' view on the significance of Emotional Health to holistic wellbeing, there are other studies that have pointed to the need to include Emotional Health in the school curriculum with increased activities for adolescents [10]. Katherine We are in her book on Promoting Mental, Emotional and Social Health highlights some key curriculum principles for providing a supportive school environment to enhance the mental and emotional health of children [11]. Though many proposals have been made, the fact however is that it is yet to be practically accomplished.

Studies point out the importance of 'affect regulation' in dealing with a broad range of behavioural and emotional health problems that can occur during the period of adolescence [12] and the role of emotions in influencing important decision making in adolescence which in turn leads to good behavioural and emotional health. Some of those suggest that reappraisal as an Emotion Regulation strategy serves as a defence against the negative social effects of poorer mental health like peer victimization, friendship satisfaction, and family satisfaction in young adolescents [13]. These studies emphasize much on the role of emotion regulation and management for enhanced mental

health substantiating the notion of mental health having a strong emotional basis.

The concepts of Emotional Health and Mental health that have been used interchangeably as pointed out in the article appears to be an issue debated over in many blogs. Apart from the many studies mentioned in the article which point to this overlapping of the use of the two terms, few research blogs like the Pyramid healthcare and Pasadena Villa record the extensive differences between the two concepts of mental health and emotional health, updated in 2019. For instance, mental health and emotional health are differentiated as 'processing information' versus 'expressing emotion' [14]. It is argued that though the two concepts are separate in characteristics, they are both necessary and work together cohesively [15].

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A promising line of development within this research field could be a focus on spiritual wellbeing, while describing the holistic personality of an individual. Emotional health, taken as a holistic perspective, contributing to overall wellbeing and highlighting the influence of the physical, mental, psychological and social wellbeing on a person's overall wellbeing could also consider the dimension of spiritual wellbeing. There have been studies done on the potential relevance of Spirituality to physical and emotional health. Spiritual support offered to members can enhance their emotional health which in turn enhances their pain management, protects against depression and reduces risk of substance abuse and suicide [16]. Another study has also established the relationship between spiritual health and quality of life, and mental health and burnout as being influenced by emotional regulation [17]. If it is considered true that the holistic wellbeing of an individual includes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects, it could be granted that emotional regulation could play an active role in it and more studies could dwell on establishing the contribution of emotional health by way of spiritual health, to the holistic wellbeing of persons.

There are other studies that point to the role of economic poverty as being detrimental to children's emotional development and mental health [18]. Emotional health which is understood as a positive state of wellbeing and the feeling of emotional security, should have to address the socio-economic issue of poverty too, which could hamper one's emotional health.

Opening a whole new arena, there are a few researchers coming up with tools and strategies to enhance the emotional health of individuals. 'Roadmap tools' was prepared by Pickles et al., to build resilience and good emotional health among patients and families with chronic paediatric conditions [19]. Kelly's [20] explaining what emotional health is, lists a set of 9 characteristics of an emotionally healthy person, comparing emotional health and mental

health and providing 11 activities and assessments to enhance emotional health. Although it is evident that the concept of emotional health, with its specificity, is gradually occupying the mainstream psychological thought and its significance is being explored more, it still needs a formidable back up of scientific research. While there are many web pages and blogs on emotional health as topic of research, specific scientific studies need to be undertaken and promoted, towards a shift in focus from insisting on mental health to considering emotional health as a broader framework to foster mental health and holistic wellbeing. There is indeed a wide scope for research in the specific understanding of emotional health, as a holistic perspective to promoting a healthy personality.

CONCLUSION

Undeniably, emotional health is indispensable for holistic wellbeing of a person. An excessive focus on promotion of mental health, could give way to a holistic perspective of emotional health of individuals which naturally would include and result in positive mental health. An observable paucity of literature on the field of emotional health, in reality offers ample scope for further research, which could address hitherto scarcely addressed sub dimensions such as the spiritual, the socio-economic and such others. The definition, characteristics, components, tools to measure and interventions to enhance the Emotional Health of an individual has to be backed up by strong theories and concrete research findings. Enhancing emotional health fosters resilience, self-awareness and an overall feeling of contentment. Hence emotional health, as the article in consideration asserts, cannot and should not be identified with mental health, but be looked at as a dimension in itself towards a holistic perspective of a healthy personality.

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