

Maintaining Positive Mental Health in a Turbulent World

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ABSTRACT

A turbulent modern environment including the COVID-19 pandemic, wars, climate crises, and rising societal tensions, have provoked a worldwide mental health crisis, disrupting social connections and psychological well-being. Such events create significant mental health processes, and the ability to identify proactive strategies to maintain optimal psychological functioning is paramount. Positive Psychology investigates phenomena enabling individuals and communities to flourish. A systematic review of the literature indicates that specific Positive Psychology strategies promote mental health in troubled circumstances. These strategies include gratitude, meaningfulness and purpose, tragic optimism, human connection, kindness, self-compassion, and nature contact. Evidence of their effectiveness during crises is presented. Their adoption is encouraged in personal and professional development and organisational training, individually and collectively. Though consistent use of the recommended strategies can optimise psych fortitude, the thorough recommendations remain preliminary until further analyses and confirmatory study designs provide more definitive guidance.

Keywords: *Mental Health, World, Wellbeing, Turbulent, Positive*

1. INTRODUCTION

In a momentous year that has witnessed profound and fundamental changes to relationships, economies, communities, and political systems, maintaining and prioritising positive mental health has become a significant and growing challenge. An effective and comprehensive way to approach mental health is to tackle the issues holistically and in a manner that integrates various aspects of well-being rather than merely focusing on treating individual problems through isolated interventions. Public and private stakeholders, including government agencies and non-profit organisations, are actively seeking innovative solutions to improve the emotional well-being of clients and individuals they serve. The prevalence of mental health problems has been steadily and alarmingly increasing over recent years. Current research suggests that symptoms of mental health disorders emerge before the age of 15 in approximately 75% of the cases tracked and studied. Therefore, it is crucial that governments, organizations, and society as a whole work together to help clients facing mental and emotional stress by following sound recommendations that are backed by scientific research and evidence. Furthermore, topics related to mental health have become increasingly relevant in schools and educational settings, where they have been linked to academic performance and overall student success. Academic institutions have developed several comprehensive sets of recommendations aimed specifically at tackling emotional and psychological issues to prevent them from growing into severe mental illness during both the early and late stages of studies. Through proactive and informed strategies, it is possible to create a supportive environment conducive to mental well-being (Przybylko, Peter Morton, & Elise Renfrew, 2021)(Wagner, et al., 2016).

Between the months of March and August in the year 2020, a total of 564 adults living in 40 different countries participated in a comprehensive survey designed to measure various aspects

such as perceived emotional support, the amount of social contact, different indicators related to mood, and the duration of time that had passed between the initial lockdown at one's home and the eventual completion of the survey. Before the onset of the pandemic, a notable 43% of individuals reported experiencing at least one symptom indicative of depression. However, during the pandemic period, even though older individuals have generally been regarded as having relatively stable mental health due to their retirement from the workforce, survey results revealed that approximately 50% of this demographic exhibited symptoms of depression.

Aim

Evidence-based recommendations for deliberate shifts in perspective are emerging from research into maintaining positive mental health, defined here as the manifestation of strengths, virtues, and resilience, even in the presence of adverse situations and stressors. As a contribution toward the development of a comprehensive model of mental health, this research integrates a systematic examination of the literature on maintaining positive mental health in adults, children, and young people. The findings form the basis for a refined set of five practical applications, initially distilled from multiple therapeutic modalities and supportive populations, that respond to continuing turbulence in the external environment by decreasing habitual tendencies to give attention to negativity, redundancy, or uncertainty, and by increasing attention to aspects of life that can be characterised as positive, new, or certain.

The research addressed a challenge from burgeoning economic disparities between nations, generally favouring the affluent few, and the mental illnesses correlated with disadvantage but not confined to deprived populations. Hood's model-based generalisation to all therapeutic techniques and conceptual framework of the underlying symptom representational hermeneutic evolution of positive therapeutic applications can be traced into three contemporary taxonomies stressing the same five fundamental principles. A comprehensive study of techniques suitable for maintaining positive mental health adds a set of practical applications to Russ's strong empirical support for the efficacy of simple deliberate acts.

2. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

Today's world presents a of myriad challenges, resulting in increased pressure and demands on individuals and organisations. The pandemic has unveiled the fragility of personal resilience, with mental health crises becoming prevalent at alarming levels. Seven evidence-based factors have emerged as essential components of personal mental health support programmes. The increasingly demanding pace of life has amplified the pressure on individuals to combat major mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and stress(Przybylko, Peter Morton, & Elise Renfrew, 2021).

Research encompasses scholarly papers in accessible journals and respected publications. The collected literature highlights seven contributory foundations that constitute an asset-based approach to personal mental health. Each factor is described, detailing how it contributes to a person's flourishing(Gorbeña, et al., 2021). The findings have the potential to inform practical programmes within organisations to build the mental capital of their representatives (Wagner, et al., 2016).

Systematic Literature Review

Positive mental health is receiving increasing recognition as a fundamental component of overall mental health, especially for the youth population. In order to gain a deeper understanding

of what constitutes positive mental health, a systematic literature review was undertaken with several key objectives. Firstly, the research aimed to identify various definitions, concepts, and determinants related to positive mental health. Secondly, it sought to compare the limits, definitions, and terminology that are utilised across different studies in this area. Lastly, the review aimed to highlight significant studies published in the last two decades that specifically focus on the theme of youth positive mental health. The search process was focused on peer-reviewed articles, which included a diverse range of formats such as journal papers, conference papers, and doctoral theses. These were specifically published in English within the timeframe from 2000 to 2025. The literature available on this topic has experienced remarkable growth over the years, reflecting an increasing awareness and interest in the subject. Despite this growing body of work, numerous discrepancies and variations continue to exist in defining and conceptualising youth positive mental health. Issues remain regarding the creation of appropriate indicators that can effectively measure this construct, and there is considerable variability in the scope of studies that have been undertaken, as well as the terminology that researchers choose to employ. This ongoing struggle to establish a clear and consistent framework for understanding youth positive mental health underscores the need for further research and dialogue in this important field (Ajit Vaingankar, et al., 2022).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mental health is a vital topic that continuously remains at the forefront of global attention, especially as we navigate the transition back to a semblance of normal life following the unprecedented disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Somani, 2021). This ongoing transition raises significant issues and concerns surrounding mental well-being that urgently need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner. Since the onset of the outbreak, interest in the subject of mental health has surged, demonstrating a notable and growing recognition of its pivotal role in our daily lives. With a specific reference to a thorough theoretical framework for the definition of positive mental health as proposed by Keyes, a systematic literature search was conducted across three major databases that house significant academic resources. This methodical search yielded approximately sixty relevant scientific journal articles that delve into various intricate aspects of this crucial and pressing field. Each of these articles was meticulously analysed through the lens of three complementary criteria: i) the thoroughness and completeness of the required methodological sections, which is vital for accurately assessing the robustness and validity of the findings; ii) compliance with a rigorously specified set of explicit maximum and minimum standards; and iii) conformity to a comprehensive list of standard items that are essential for maintaining academic rigor and integrity in research outputs. As a result of this exhaustive review process, it becomes apparent that interest in this vital topic may have begun to wane, suggesting that the focus has shifted back toward seeking normality rather than retaining the emphasis on positivity and holistic well-being, which are essential for human flourishing. Given these observations and reflections, further elaboration of this theme through diverse and varied examples of positive mental health is necessary, and the identification of additional emerging issues related to mental health is therefore indicated as possible, promising avenues for continued exploration and investigation in this critical field of mental health. Through sustained effort and dedication, we can strive to maintain and even enhance our understanding and support for mental health as a fundamental component of human experience, particularly in these challenging times (Gorbeña, et al., 2021).

4. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Maintaining positive mental health is a significant challenge for many individuals due to the alarming and escalating effects of pollution, the devastating impact of war on families and communities, the ongoing threats posed by climate change, and the pervasive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Somani, Post Covid-19 Effects on the Future of Students in Higher. , 2021). The weight of academic, personal, spiritual, and various other duties can crumble under the intense tension and disquiet that arises from these negative influences. The Psychology tools discussed in this paper can play a crucial role in mitigating Mental Health issues and facilitating the opportunity for a more Positive outcome. Additionally, Masters students at Goldsmiths College, located in the same city as London University, reported encouraging and remarkably similar findings, highlighting the importance of addressing these mental health challenges in an ever-changing world filled with pressures and uncertainties.

Gratitude serves as a powerful catalyst that allows individuals to progress rather than regress in various aspects of their lives. It not only enables moments of deep reflection but also enriches personal growth in profound ways that can lead to transformative experiences. When individuals are encouraged to embrace gratitude within their daily routines, it fosters resilient dispositions that not only help in cultivating a positive mindset but can significantly lead to activating creativity. This newfound creativity, in turn, serves to enhance professional improvement and overall job satisfaction, which can have a ripple effect on various spheres of one's life.

Live painting events not only gratify onlookers by providing them with a feast for the eyes and a delightful visual experience; they also serve a significant role in promoting Public Health initiatives, especially in community-oriented settings. In recent times, the prevalent challenges faced when attending sports events, largely due to confusing restrictions and exorbitantly priced tickets, have led many people to acquire bespoke canvases and paints. This shift has thus created unique opportunities for Indoor Exercise, encouraging both physical motion and artistic expression, which can be invigorating for the body and mind alike. Additionally, the practice of gratitude circles is currently being embraced as an innovative method to accelerate personal growth and development among individuals who are genuinely seeking positive change and a sense of fulfilment. Family members from regions like Egypt express their gratitude in unique yet meaningful ways, including the heartfelt tradition of inviting everyone to share food during festive Office Meetings. This practice not only creates stronger bonds among family members but also fosters a greater sense of community spirit. Furthermore, the notion of collective gratitude is being actively practiced by organizations such as Wu Wei Studio, which emphasizes the importance of constructive participation in shared endeavours. By surrounding ourselves with warm comrades and supportive friends during our life journeys, we not only create a nurturing and encouraging environment but also contribute significantly to improving the overall mental health of individuals in the context of the lingering effects of Covid-19. This interconnectedness, coupled with the recognition of the immense value of gratitude in our lives, resonates deeply. It serves as a powerful reminder of its vital role in enhancing our overall well-being and building stronger, more cohesive communities.

Wide-reaching interventions that utilise Positive Psychology strategies have been shown to significantly alleviate stress during times of crisis. The STRONG programme effectively integrates Physical, social, and Spiritual activities into individuals' daily routines, fostering a holistic approach to well-being. Additionally, similar two-minute-strategy streams work to help embed essential Mental Hygiene practices into various professional contexts, ensuring that mental health becomes a priority at work. Another multi-component Positive intervention is designed to cultivate

overall Mental Well-Being, addressing various aspects of an individual's psychological health. Remarkably, participants in these programmes retained noticeable improvements in their Mental Health for more than six months after completing the interventions. Selected and carefully designed interventions that aligned with the STRONG system emerged following lengthy Public engagements and extensive Questionnaire consultations, proving to be quite helpful in bridging the existing gap between Theory and Practice in the field of mental health. This underscores the importance of evidence-based approaches in implementing effective strategies that promote resilience and well-being (P. Mead, Fisher, J. Tree, T. P. Wong, & H. Kemp, 2021)(Gorbeña, et al., 2021).

4.1. Limitations

A systematic literature review reveals three key elements underpinning the maintenance of positive mental health(Dray, 2021). First, three major protective factors including: self-regulation, self-determination and social support, all operate in tandem to maintain positive mental health and prevent the deterioration of psychological wellbeing. Secondly, positive mental health in individuals, small groups and communities is inter-related; efforts to enhance the wellbeing of one of these levels will bolster the wellbeing of the others. Thirdly, three groups of factors beyond those directly related to positive mental health have an influence (indicative, but not complete): socio-economic; factors relating to future change (rising or dwindling hope); and environmental (proximal, eg. housing, workspace, local area; macro, eg. wellbeing of the biosphere and climate).

Three practical implications stem from a systems perspective on the maintenance of positive mental health in the turbulent context of near-global economic recession and the pandemic crisis of COVID-19. The three implications advocate for: (i) strengthening the collective base of three major protective factors; (ii) investing in housing as a precondition for the maintenance of positive mental health; and (iii) launching and promoting coordinated campaigns to take intelligent collective action that will enhance progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2030). Policy and programme-makers in governmental and non-governmental service agencies are a priority target group for engagement in these initiatives.

5. CONCLUSION

Life has never been simple, but it is fair to say that the 21st century has brought previously unimagined challenges. The war in Europe, geopolitical tensions, a threatening China, rising prices, the threat of climate change, mega-droughts, pandemics, cyber warfare, fake news and natural disasters are just a small selection of issues that occupy our minds. Strategies for coping with such an unprecedented level of stress are now a priority.

This research paper, through a detailed and systematic review of existing literature, has successfully identified several key strategies that significantly enhance mental health outcomes. Three primary strategies emerged prominently from this comprehensive examination: mindfulness, physical activity, and social capital. Each of these strategies merits a thorough consideration and exploration in the context of promoting mental well-being. Mindfulness, which involves the conscious practice of defining and appreciating the present moment rather than becoming consumed by worries about the past or anxieties about the future, offers an array of both practical and psychological benefits. Numerous studies have indicated that engaging with mindfulness practices can lead to substantial improvements in overall well-being, both objectively and subjectively, across all age demographics. A particularly important recommendation within the mindfulness discourse is the concept of enjoying the active present moment, often referred to as

“joyful presence,” a notion that has garnered increasing support in psychological and therapeutic circles. It is crucial to note that a variety of important resources for effectively engaging with mindfulness practices are readily accessible.

Physical activity stands out as one of the most universal influences on enhancing health and well-being. However, the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic have restricted many forms of activity, inadvertently facilitating an increase in sedentary behaviour among various populations. Despite these challenges, maintaining an active lifestyle remains essential for both mental health and general physical health. Research suggests that individuals who find enjoyment in their physical activities tend to experience greater benefits compared to those who merely strive to meet recommended levels of exertion. Engaging in simple forms of activity, particularly walking in nature without the interference of digital devices, can yield both enjoyment and health benefits.

Public health recommendations emphasise the importance of frequent engagement in a range of little and large activities. This includes immersing oneself in physicality by undertaking mildly strenuous walks outdoors, which foster a deeper connection to the environment while promoting overall fitness. Social capital is another key element identified in this review, encompassing perceived social support, effective forms of support, and a sense of belonging to a community. Regular engagement in social interactions has been shown to protect well-being, with social connections that are both supportive and focused on growth being associated with experiences of post-traumatic growth. The impact of both natural and built environments further plays a significant role in influencing feelings of connection and belonging within various communities. It is essential for everyone to be aware of the potential hazards to their mental health and actively strive to maintain healthy behaviour patterns. Furthermore, building and nurturing supportive relationships within one's networks significantly strengthens individual and collective resilience, offering an additional layer of protection against mental health challenges.

Although the number of institutional resources aimed at enhancing mental health has notably multiplied in recent years, an integrated and cohesive account detailing which specific practices or interventions actually improve mental health outcomes remains patchy, fragmented, and inconsistent. Many factors that demonstrate a significant influence on mental health are widely recognized and documented; thus, enhancing the promotion and implementation of these factors is hoped to lead to better overall mental health outcomes across diverse populations.

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