



THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN MODERN SOCIETY

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Abstract: In today's society, mental health is a topic frequently discussed. With the extent of changes in our daily lives in recent years, driven by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the increasing integration of technology into our daily routines, and social pressures, attention to the mental well-being of every individual in society has grown. While some sceptics view it as a topic that is given more attention than it deserves, we must acknowledge the impact that this highly subjective factor has both on every individual within the community we live in and on society as a whole. Mental health has a profound effect on the development of personal life, but it also clearly influences individual performance in academic and professional settings. The well-being of each person and of society, in general, is closely linked to thriving mental health; however, this topic remains stigmatized and often insufficiently addressed.

Key words: Anxiety, burnout, depression, mental health, modern society.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Mental health is a state of well-being in which people can realize their potential, cope with stress, work, and contribute to the life of the community”[1]. Mental health can be jeopardized by numerous factors around us, and it also serves as a barometer of our evolution as a society. Thus, mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety may arise, with these being just two of the most well-known conditions that affect a considerable portion of the population.

The rapid developments of modern society have a significant impact on mental health. The psychological state of individuals is greatly influenced by chronic stress, social isolation, and professional pressures.

- Chronic stress and the modern lifestyle:

Due to the increasingly fast-paced lifestyle, many individuals face chronic stress. The boundary between professional and personal life no longer exists due to constant connectivity through technology. The constant pressure on people arises when they are always trying to balance their family, professional, and social roles. If not properly managed, chronic stress can lead to anxiety, depression, or cardiovascular conditions.

- Social isolation and digital connectivity:

Social isolation is caused by digital connectivity, and face-to-face interactions are becoming increasingly rare. This can lead to the decline of several important factors in maintaining good mental health, such as feelings of loneliness and reduced social support.

Additionally, feelings of isolation can be amplified by social media through personal comparisons with the ideals presented by others. This can lead to the conclusion that we are inadequate or insufficient.

- Professional pressures and burnout:

Performance is a major focus in modern society, and the pressure to excel in one's career and achieve quick results can lead to mental fatigue and burnout. Many people face symptoms of emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and depression. This is due to professional stress, long working hours, the lack of balance between work and personal life, and achieving results that are lower than expected. The constant pressure intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people began working from home, blurring the boundaries between work and personal life.

- Economic changes and uncertainty about the future:

Economic instability and financial crises, which are part of the rapid economic changes and uncertainty about the future, can contribute to generalized anxiety among the population. A significant source of stress is the fear of losing one's job or long-term financial stability.

- Increased awareness and reduction of stigma:

In the past, the topic of mental health was stigmatized and rarely discussed. Recently, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of mental health, viewing it as an essential aspect of overall well-



being. These changes have led to greater openness in discussing mental health issues and the establishment of support and treatment services.

Technological developments and economic changes present in modern society influence the psychological well-being of individuals. For this reason, it is necessary to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

According to the Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2023 regarding mental health, the results were quite concerning. "Almost half of the respondents (46%) have faced an emotional or psychosocial problem in the last twelve months, such as depression or anxiety." [2]. The number of people affected by mental health issues is alarmingly high, and the main concern is that the majority are young adults or adolescents, the younger generations who are considered to be our future as a society.

A study of interest on this topic, conducted by the World Health Organization, reveals that "suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for young people aged 15-29." [3].

National surveys are also of great interest. "Romania ranks 58th in the world for suicide rates and 126th for depression. Anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders are among the leading causes of illness and suffering among young people. In Romania, approximately 22,000 children and young people live with a mental health diagnosis." [4]. These results are nonetheless conclusive and help us realize how real and tangible this issue is, even in our country. Over the years, and after numerous studies in the field, it has been found that, in our country, the onset of mental disorders occurs among children and adolescents.

At the same time, a discrepancy has been observed between the results of studies in this field from Romania and other developed countries, such as the United States. Aside from the numerous causes that may lead to these mental disorders, which generally vary from state to state depending on the concerns and mentality of society, other possible factors for the differences in statistics could be under diagnosis and over reporting of symptoms or cases of mental illnesses.

Furthermore, it has been easily concluded that the methods of support for these situations are quite limited in Romania, with little emphasis placed on mental health, often being an overlooked subject: "Over 40% of the new cases identified annually are children from rural areas with no access to habitation/rehabilitation services in larger cities." [5].

Certainly, the results of these surveys are predominantly influenced by devastating or significant events that concern a large part of society at that moment. Major changes, pandemics, the increasing risk of jeopardizing everyday well-being, and other possible

causes of heightened stress within the community clearly impact the community as a whole and, implicitly, all its members.

The issue of mental health also extends at the collective level, affecting not only the individuals involved but also society as a whole.

An analysis conducted by the London School of Economics highlights the overwhelming losses suffered globally: "The economic losses resulting from mental disorders that lead to disability or death among young people are estimated at approximately 390 billion dollars annually." [6].

These massive effects extend to a much larger scale than we might have imagined. Poor mental health is not limited to affecting just the individual; this impact is immeasurable and affects the broader community as well.

3. FACTORS INFLUENCING MENTAL HEALTH IN MODERN SOCIETY

"Societies are constantly evolving, facing frequent crises, and the impact of stress factors, such as health crises, natural disasters, climate issues, humanitarian crises, geopolitical conflicts, digitalization, discrimination, violence, socioeconomic inequalities, harmful substances, and isolation, cannot be ignored." [7].

Although it is a very challenging topic to encompass, as it varies drastically from one person to another and the same factors can have a differing impact, it is important to try to understand the causes of these issues and to reduce the risks of mental illnesses, as well as to seek more effective solutions for their treatment, empowerment, or rehabilitation for those in such situations.

Therefore, it is important to consider the factors that contribute to influencing the psychological well-being of the population. I will mention a few of the most important factors in this field. By analysing these, we can better understand how the negative effects of their impact on society can be prevented and how we can assist those already affected.

A resounding factor that gained significant momentum and drastically impacted the mental health of everyone in recent years is the COVID-19 pandemic. The drastic measures that we had to collectively adopt, combined with stress and uncertainty about the future, left their mark. Forced to dramatically change our lifestyle in just a few days, as well as the inherent fear of the virus, many people only realized after the pandemic period the devastating effects it had on their mental health. "During the pandemic, people became more exposed to the risk of experiencing, directly or indirectly, confusion, frustration, anxiety, and fear, sometimes combined with a lack of access to and continuity of care and adequate support for pre-existing mental or physical health conditions." [8].



However, following studies conducted by UNICEF, the WHO, and other organizations, a terrifying conclusion was reached: the most affected mentally by the pandemic were children, adolescents, and young adults. "According to the latest data provided by UNICEF, globally, at least one in seven children was directly affected by quarantine measures." [9].

Moreover, the lack of contact with others intensified these negative effects, increasing the risk of developing anxiety or depression. "Human interaction was replaced by screens, whose increased use can have a negative impact on the mental health and well-being of populations, especially children and adolescents." [10].

Thus, we can say that the effects of this pandemic were not limited to the virus itself or the physical effects it produces, but extended into a much more difficult-to-understand and treat realm—the psychological plane. These issues that emerged during the pandemic may go unnoticed for a period of time, especially in the case of children and adolescents, only to resurface later in the form of more severe manifestations, such as social anxiety, bipolar disorder, or depression.

Another predominant factor involved in damaging mental health is the digital work environment, a concept that tends to spread more and more, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic period.

During the quarantine, most employees were forced to continue their work in an innovative way—working from home. Offices were replaced by the comfort of one's own home, and the tiring and congested commute to the office was substituted by a few extra hours of sleep. At first, everything sounded perfect, but it quickly became evident that this working method is not the most effective in the long term, with employees' mental health being significantly jeopardized.

Although this conclusion was reached during the pandemic, employers have preferred to combine the new working style with the old, incorporating working from home alongside office work.

The European Parliament deemed it necessary to recognize these changes and adopt a document regarding this matter: "The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped organizational and leadership practices and altered working conditions for many workers in Europe, with consequences on working hours, well-being, and the physical environment at the workplace," "The strong prevalence of remote work is associated with extended working hours and work-related stress," "Employers are increasingly using digital tools, such as applications, software, and artificial intelligence (AI), to manage their workers; as such, algorithmic management presents new challenges for the future of work, such as technology-based control and supervision, with predictive and warning tools, real-time remote monitoring of progress and performance, and time-use control, thereby presenting significant risks to workers' health and safety, especially their mental health, their right to privacy, and their human dignity." [11], [12], [13], [14].

4. INTERVENTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

In modern society, stress and social isolation can lead to an increase in mental health disorders. Public policies and access to mental health services can provide an effective support system in managing and preventing mental health issues by reducing stigma and promoting appropriate interventions.

Thus, we can acknowledge that measures are necessary to address mental health issues and educate individuals.

Universal access to quality mental health services can be ensured through the development of infrastructure (hospitals, clinics, counselling centres) and the training of medical staff. The cost of these services should be supported by public policies, through health insurance or government subsidies, so that they are accessible to all citizens. Disadvantaged and rural areas should also have access to services through telemedicine programs or by establishing mental health centres.

A first step would be to combat the stigmatization of this topic by promoting campaigns that help people facing such problems to feel accepted and realize that asking for help is normal.

These campaigns can be carried out through traditional media (television, radio) and digital platforms (websites, social media).

Access to early education about mental health in schools and high schools plays an important role. For youth to become more resilient in the face of the problems they may encounter in life, it is necessary to introduce emotional education and stress management programs. A school environment can be created where children and adolescents feel supported and understood. Identifying early signs of mental health disorders in children and adolescents can prevent the development of serious problems. This can be achieved by implementing educational programs for parents and teachers.

Early detection initiatives can be supported by public policies through the integration of mental health screenings in regular medical exams. Additionally, easier access to empowerment or rehabilitation resources, such as psychotherapy or counselling, is necessary.

Mental health services must be integrated into the general healthcare system, as mental health should not be treated in isolation from physical health. In this regard, public policies should create a system of holistic care. Furthermore, public policies can ensure counselling services and family education programs for families who have a member suffering from mental health disorders. The most vulnerable communities, such as the homeless, victims of domestic violence, or migrants, are at higher risk of mental health issues due to stress and trauma. To build a healthy society, public policies and access to mental health services are essential.

In order for policies to be properly implemented and responsive to the needs of the community, governments can collaborate with NGOs and various organizations that focus on mental health.



5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we can say that mental health is a crucial factor for our well-being, both on an individual level and as a society. Increasing attention to this topic can greatly contribute to our evolution as humanity.

Being a common issue that concerns each of us, even if we are not personally affected, we must strive to get involved and normalize the treatment of these issues, as well as the integration of prevention measures into the lives of children and adolescents.

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