

**DISCUSS ABOUT THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MENTAL ILLNESS AND
MENTAL WELLBEING**

Papier pour la conférence académique internationale tenue par MESSAME MWENE Betty Best ce 20/02/2021

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental, pertaining to the mind: It consists also of mental hygiene which is the science that deals with the development of healthy mental and emotional reaction. While health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO), this does not only relate to our minds and bodies but also in to our quality of life, including families, friends and our communities. It refers not only to our interior mental wellbeing but also to the quality of how we live our lives. There are many concepts about Mental wellbeing and Mental Illness, amongst are; The medical concept which was developed by psychiatrists. They perceive the ill person as the problem and believe that illness stems from a chemical imbalance with the brain.

Therefore the focus for treatment has been a chemical intervention in the firm of medication or psychosurgery. This concept is often criticized for ignoring social or familial links. The psychoanalytical concepts, Freud's Psychodynamic structure of personality suggested that behaviours is influenced by id, ego and super ego with our personality developing in stages during child hood. If there are conflicts associated with a particular phase of personality development (oral, anal; phallic and genital) then fixations can develop that shows themselves into personality leading to mental illness.

Mental health is important at all stages of life from childhood, adolescent through adulthood. However with life challenges experiences, one may experience mental health problem mostly in the Arena of diseases like Covid-19, and other traumatic diseases with stress leading to behavioural challenges. A study confirms that, the quarantine aspect of Covid-19 alone can be resulting in arrange of mental health concerns from anxiety and anger to sleep disturbances, depression and post- traumatic stress disorders. (Karen, G; 2020).

Mental health includes our emotions, Psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel and react while mental illness are the disorders of mood or psychiatric problems.

2. METHODS

Mental wellbeing is about our emotions, psychological and social wellbeing and how we cope with the ups and downs of our daily life. There are human factors that are concerned with our daily well-being; self-acceptance purpose in life, personal growth, autonomy, environmental and positive relationships with people. Mental wellbeing can be viewed as representing the positive emotional aspects of mental health. Negative emotions are not good for our health. This is also mentioned in a study that confirms that wellbeing is the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy and prosperity. Elaine, m ;(2015).

There are human factors that affect well-being like population size, cultural laws, rules and regulations, business and trade, political systems and wars. In some places, long periods of stability have allowed improvement in living conditions confirming our popular saying that, “health is wealth”.

Some five ways to wellbeing are:-

- Connect: Connect with people of good well as good relationships are important for your mental well-being.
- Be physically active. Being physically active is great for our physical health and fitness
- Learn new skills. New skills on ours performances will better our grades and skills with new equipment. Mental health and wellbeing as a core in educational journey, build resilience against adversity, develop, protective factions from mental ill health. well-being leads to positive emotions.
- Give to others; (sharing with others, and we should give to those who don't have. Being one an others keeper is a sign of caring.
- Respect preventive measures prescribed. The respect for preventive measures presented by the states against Covid19 and other diseases should be put into practice:
 - Regular hand washing, use of masks amongst people, distance spacing of 01 meters apart. Do testing in the appropriate centres. Use of hand sanitizers, no hand shaking.
 - Go to the appropriate hospitals if signs and symptoms appeals.

Some dimensions of wellbeing:

- Spiritual wellness: Is putting God first in all what we do

- Emotional wellness: emotion wellness refers to building an awareness accepting one's feelings and moods,
- Physical wellness: Feeling very healthy and full of energy and being healthy to carryout activities. Social wellness: to be sociable, share with others and give mostly to the needy and neighbours. .Attend social gatherings of interest. Sam; Berns; (2014).
- **How to measure wellbeing:** The overall quality of life is measured like serenity, spiritual concerns, autonomy, emotional balance, environmental mastery, personal growth initiative, positive relations with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance, self-esteem, physical wellbeing, occupational wellbeing, economic wellbeing, speech assessment.
- **Importance of Measuring Wellbeing:** Helps us to evaluate the impact of our services on people's lives but also which aspect of their lives people feel most dissatisfied with, which can help us tailor our services to meet needs.
- Increasing wellbeing is generally accepted as one of the essential components of social progress, but in different aspects of life it is better to measure the wellbeing-outcome.
- **Improving on wellbeing:** Increasing support to mental health, cooperation, caring economics, promoting altruism; economic harmony
- **Pillars of wellbeing:** Physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, financial wellbeing; social wellbeing. Each pillar contributes to overall wellbeing and the benefit of achieving wellbeing.

3. RESULTS

mental illness

Mental illness, also known as mental disorder and medically called Psychiatric disorders, refers to those disorders that affect a person's mood, thinking and behaviour. These problems might be acute or chronic.

It is often said that the exact causes of mental illnesses is unknown, but it is becoming clearer through research that many conditions are precipitated by a combination of biological psychological and environmental factors. However, individuals react and differ in different ways. There are some groups in the society that are more exposed to more stressor than others. These include: migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, those living in extreme poverty and those

who have no true sense of self. These groups are more vulnerable to developing mental illness and there can be the existence of co-morbidity. Callaghan, p; Waldock, H (2014).

Disposing factors of Mental Illness

*Biological factors: When abnormal balance of neurotransmitter nerve cell chemicals that enables brain cells to communicate with each other are out of balance or not working properly, symptoms of mental illness can't develop.

- Genetics: Some illnesses runs in families and is passed on through genes. It is thought that a person inherits susceptibility (multiple gene involvement), which when coupled with other factors, can trigger symptoms of mental illness.
- Infections: Can be linked to brain damage and the development of mental illness, or the worsening of symptoms for example: autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorder has been linked to the development of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) in children.
- Brain injury: The cause may be prenatal, birth trauma, exposure to toxins, or acquired brain injury traumas from brain accidents
- *Psychological factors:
 - Severe psychological trauma of childhood, example: emotional, physical or sexual abuse and a significant early-loss of parents, siblings, husband or wife.
 - Emotional or physical neglect and poor ability to relate to others Emotions are part of our ingrained DNA and expressed as, anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise,
- *Environmental factors:
 - A dysfunctional family life for example, quarrelling and fighting among couples.
 - Death or divorce of spouses, extreme poverty and frequent anger, anxiety or loneliness, and low self-esteem.
 - Abrupt changes of jobs or schools, social or cultural expectations
 - Drug abuse, substances misuse by children, individuals or parents like cocaine, marijuana, tramadol, cigarettes smoking and alcohols.

Signs and Symptoms – Warning Signs of Mental Illness

- Mood disorders: These disorders are called effective mood disorders involving persisting feeling of sadness, or fluctuation from extreme happiness to sadness.
- Depression, excessive paranoia, worry or anxiety, long lasting sadness or instability.
- Excessive changes in mood, social withdrawal, poor concentration
- Dramatic changes in eating patterns, insomnia, lack of sleep, withdrawal from friends and activities, significant tiredness, low energy or problems and complains
- Excessive fear or worries, or extreme feelings of quiet, tearfulness and crying

1. Signs and symptoms of Mental Illness can vary, depending on the disorder circumstances and other factors. ; Common symptoms:

- Mood changes, depression: Anxiety is greater than the accepted response to a sad or tragic life event. It is typical to have disturbance of sleep, reduced appetite, little interest in life, and feeling hopeless and helpless.
- Anxiety: This is greater than the tension felt in a stressful situation such as exams. It is characterised by physical symptoms such as palpitation, sweating, tremor, and the fear that something awful is about to happen.
- Elation: This is greater than excitement and is coupled with irritability and impatience.
- Thought processes:
 - Delusions, obsessional or compulsive thoughts
 - Ritualistic behaviour that cannot be interrupted
- Odd thoughts (thought insertion,) schizophrenia.
- Perceptual changes (hallucinations) auditory, visual, olfactory, fickle, gustatory odd full taste)
- Speech changes. They may lose or have exaggerated intonation aggressively.

Early detection of Mental Illness

The focus of early detection is on patterns of behaviour. Physical health problems need to be excluded before considering mental illness.

- ❖ In younger children/Adolescents
 - Clear change in school performances, misuse of alcohol and drugs, marked changes in sleeping and, or eating habits. Many complaints of physical ailments like Headaches
 - Aggressive or non-aggressive consistent infringements of rights of others.

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- Opposition to authority; including truancy, thefts, vandalism and killing of classmates and/or teachers with dangerous weapons, knives and sharp instruments
- Recurrent outbursts of anger leading to aggression.

The following signs can indicate many things but if they persist they may indicate the onset of a mental illness:

- Changes in adults:
 - Withdrawal and loss of interest in usual activities, loss of energy and motivation
 - Problems with memory and concentration, deterioration in work or study
 - Sleep or appetite disturbance, unusual ideas and behaviours, feeling and showing changes somewhere
- Changes in older persons
 - Early dementia, recent memory loss, disorientation to time and familiar places
 - Misplacing things, changing of moods or behaviour unrelated to events
 - Changes in personality: Stops communicating, loss of initiative, does not get dressed, poor and decreased judgement.

Managing symptoms of Mental Illness

- Psychotherapy by a specialist
 - Treatment plan:
 - Medications and respect of RDVs, hospitalization, support groups
 - Complementary & Alternative Medicine, self-help plan, fees support
- Coping with Mental Health Symptoms
 - Accept your needs, manage your time well, practise relaxation, exercise daily.
 - Set aside time for yourself, eat well, get enough sleep, avoid alcohol and drugs People diagnosed with mental health illness may have treatment plans that include medications and psychotherapy, but they also benefit from strategies to minimise wellbeing and overall mental health.

4. DISCUSSION

Question 1: What does Optimal Mental Wellbeing look like for you, your family, and your community?

Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential. People can cope with normal stress of life, and work productively and fruitfully and are able to make a contribution to their community.

Optimal Mental wellbeing also means “good mental wellbeing”. Good mental wellbeing is an important part of keeping fit and taking care of one’s own mental hygiene, and this might differ according to individual perception and social standards. It therefore means different ways of mental health and reactions to life situations. *Callaghan. p; Waldock, H;(2011).*

Creating good relationships with co-workers and solving problems amicably.

Having good socio-economic status like being able to pay bills (water, electricity and cable bills). Optimal Mental wellbeing to me is as a result of maintaining quality lifestyle through mental hygiene. Having the ability or ways to good living, being happy and satisfactory in our undertakings and achievements.

Good mental wellbeing will be achieved through:

- Good nutrition: Having a balanced diet of proteins for body building, moderate intake of carbohydrates and oils for energy, vitamins and minerals as protective foods that help our bodies to work well and keep our skin healthy.
- Having a good job or an income generating activity, because idleness will bring about poverty that will lead to stress and consequently to mental problems.
- Better living conditions, having a house or home to live in. Most homeless people suffer from mental illness because of sleeping outside in cold weather, therefore facing stressful conditions.
- The fear of diseases like HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 is indeed stressful and the non-respect of preventive measures will lead to contacting the diseases that may bring mental disorders.
- The ability to learn and upgrade one’s profile, being knowledgeable is very helpful to a good mental wellbeing.
- Carrying out good personal and environment hygiene will obviously lead to an optimal mental wellbeing

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- Seeking an optimal wellbeing also entails being orderly in complex matters, and having an organised approach to problems and conflicts.
- Avoiding quarrels and fighting, living a life of peace and tranquillity. Trying to live in peace with people and be one another's keeper.
- Respecting one's country's constitution and the right of citizenship will lead to good mental wellbeing.
- Getting the rightful vaccines to prevent diseases is another better way of having good mental wellbeing.

At the family level

A family is a group of one or more parents, children with some family members living together as a unit "the descendants of a common ancestor".

- Optimal health mental wellbeing at the family circle is seeking at being a stable harmonious family with love, sharing together in times of joy and sadness.
- Good communication is needed in the family, which is the key to all relationships. (*Eales, 2011*).
- Family heads should accept responsibilities and empower others, which will lead to their wellbeing.
- Avoid quarrelling and fighting that will stigmatise children to mental problems.
- Giving children rights to education, healthcare and social activities like sports, will lead to their wellbeing.
- Sharing of resources and income together will lead to mutual understanding and will bring good mutual wellbeing of the family.
- The respect for one another, accepting in-laws as your parents too, without discrimination, will enhance the family wellbeing.

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- In polygamous families, the sharing of resources equitably and the writing and leaving “wills” will always help to avoid fighting over properties, the right to ownership will lead to the wellbeing of the family members.

With the community

A community is a group of people living in the same place or having a particular character with common interests.

Optimal mental wellbeing can be achieved through many objectives as:

- Community participation

People are encouraged to assist in those activities that will help in achieving their maximum health potentials.

- The provision of pipe borne clean safe water, or from a good well will prevent them from having waterborne diseases.
- Have nearby schools where the children will have their education
- Have roads to other villages, for easy communication. Also, farms to market roads will help them to transport their crops easier.
- The people are taught ways of farming for much and better production of food items that will boost their nutritional and socio-economical wellbeing.
- The construction of a health centre and primary health care in the community will improve their health status when sick.
- Community development committees are put in place to help follow up their developmental issues and projects.
- They will have slogans like keep the community clean, and will have days kept aside to clean their environments.

The community is also encouraged on:

- Good farming to have better food.
- Clean and healthy homes-by and using good well-built latrines with lids.
- Keeping their homes and environment clean.

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- Avoid mosquitoes by the use of impregnated mosquito nets to prevent mosquitoes.
- Living together with others who have ran from their villages for safety.
- The acceptance of living together with the fluctuation of others from the war zones will help them have a good mental wellbeing in the community.
- The provision of some vigilant groups in some communities is very important for their security towards their wellbeing.

The above and others will contribute to the welfare of the community for optimal mental wellbeing.

Wood, E; 2edition, p; 108,

Contributing factors of optimal mental wellbeing:

- Learning new skills such as activities like painting, sports, choral singing will contribute to mental wellbeing.
- Spending quality time with close friends and family.
- Working, having a job or carrying on activities which will provide a sense of purpose.
- Be physically active is not only great for your physical health and fitness. Evidence shows that it can also improve some people's mental wellbeing.
- Try new hobbies such as writing, doing sports, painting, and or listening to cool music, may enhance good behavioural change.

Question 2: What can you do to improve your mental wellbeing?

Critical thinking.

If we think critically and collect the data signifying people or patient's need, we can change behaviours, perspectives or practices towards behaviour or care, as evidence based practice will be put in place. Our reflection thinking after our interaction with people will help for their concern. This is confirmed by KAY, K; & BETH P, page 190 that with critical thinking the Nurse consciously developed to improve patient outcome which is driven by their needs of the patient and family.

An important part of keeping fit and healthy is to take care of one's self. There are many things we can do to have or keep ourselves mentally healthy as follows:

- **Enough sleep.**

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Sleep is really important to our physical and mental health. Sleep helps to regulate the chemicals in our brains that transmit information. These chemicals are important in managing our moods and emotions. If we don't get enough sleep, we can start to feel depressed or anxious. So it is advisable to get 7-8 hours of sleep a night.

- **Sleep habits / sleep hygiene.**

*Creating a sleep inducing bedroom

- Focus on maximum comfort and minimizing distraction. Use of high performance mattresses.
- Choice of quality bedding of cotton sheets and blankets
- Avoid light disruption by the use of blackout curtains blinds of windows and doors.
- Cultivate peace and quietness.

*Keeping noise to a minimum is an important part of building a sleep-positive bedroom.

- To eliminate nearby sources of noise, consider dowering with the use of fan; ear phones plugs are another option to stop abrasive sounds. Agreeable temperature.
- Our bedrooms should never be too hot or too cold. The ideal temperature can vary based on individuals. Most research experience supported sleeping in a colder room around 65 degrees.

* **Good Nutrition (Eating a balanced diet).**

The food we eat act much in our bodies and minds. Many illnesses will develop in us due to poor nutrition. A deficiency of some food elements will lead us to malnutrition, rickets, marasmus, blindness etc. So it's essential to take or eat proteins, carbohydrates and oils moderately, vitamins and minerals for an optimal wellbeing.

• **Activity and Exercise**

Some physical exercises and activities has shown to reduce stress, and improve mood. Regular exercise is a great way to look after our wellbeing. Exercising outside is said to be

- Being active does not only give you a sense of achievement but it boasts the chemicals in our brains that helps put us in good mood.
- That exercising can help eliminate low mood, anxiety, stress and feeling tired and lazy.

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- It is also linked to living a longer life. 30 minutes of walk a day is helpful. This is also confirmed by National Center for chronic disease prevention and Health Promotion” (2016, July 15).

***Avoiding alcohol, smoking and drugs**

Although these can temporarily make us feel excited and good, but the abusive use always leads us in chaos, aggressiveness, violence, high or low mood with others.

- Drinking alcohol for long can leave one with thiamine deficiency. Thiamine is important for the brain functioning and a deficiency can lead to severe memory problems, confusion and eye problems. Dr. Bhat a psychiatrist revealed in one of his article that prolonged substance abuse can result in a dangerous cycle of addiction.(25th jan.2021).

-Drugs like cocaine, marijuana, tramadol and others will cause withdrawal syndromes with problem of paranoia and delusions, therefore leading not only to mental disorders but also physical but also physical elevation of mood paunchy into frequent violence and fighting which at times result to death.

Get some sun light

Sunlight is a great source of Vitamin D. Vitamin D is really important vitamin for our bodies and brain to release chemicals which improves our mood like enorphins and serotonin. 30 minutes to 2 hours of sun a day is ideal. So we are advised to go into the sun when we can but with our eyes and skin safe.

It is observed that some people become depressed because they aren't getting enough sunlight which is known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Some then find using special light therapy-lamps to help alleviate symptoms.

***Stress Management**

Stress is often unavoidable but knowing what triggers your stress and knowing how to cope with it is key in maintaining good health.

-Try to manage your responsibilities and worries by making a list and schedule of when you can resolve each issue.

***Do something you enjoy**

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Try to make time for doing the funny things you enjoy like taking a walk, singing, dancing, reading novels, and or attending musical shows. If we don't spend time doing things we like and enjoy, we can always become irritable and unhappy.

***Connect with others**

We should always make efforts to maintain good relationship and talk with people whenever we have the chance.

Having friends is important, not just for self-esteem but also for support.

When lonely, one may think from one thing or problem to another, but talking to someone helps ventilate your lungs and proves on memory tension.

***Ask for Help**

One of the most important ways to keep yourself mentally healthy is to recognise when you are not feeling good and know when to ask for help. There is no shame in asking someone for support, if you are feeling low or stressed, you can try speaking to your friend and family.

***Seek Medical Care**

Medical and Health care is the maintenance or improvement of health through prevention, diagnosis, treatment and recovery for the cure of diseases, illnesses, injury and other physical and mental impairments in people Medical Care has several important functions other than restoring or maintaining health. Other functions like consultation, health education and counseling are also very important for our wellbeing.

Access to health care may vary across countries, communities and individuals influenced by social and economic conditions as well as health policies. Health care is conventionally regarded as an important determinant in promoting the general, physical and mental health and wellbeing of people around the world

Question 3: What can your agency do to improve the mental wellbeing of your country?

An agency is a company or organisation providing particular services to other business persons or groups.

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To improve the mental wellbeing of our country, an agency can:

- Provide job opportunities for income generating activities.
- Provision of insurances for their workers, medical insurance in case of illness.
- Providing low house cost for the workers or housing for free.
- Markets in the community are created to enable people sell their goods and buy.
- Some agencies build schools for some communities, like the “Ecole des Champions” by the “Chantal BIYA Foundation for quality education and mental well –being.
- Some agencies like the Fire Brigade will help to quench fire in cases of fire disasters.
- Provision of electricity and portable water like Eneo and Cam water.
- Some will help in constructing roads and bridges for easy asses from one town to another.
- Creation of supermarkets like DOVV, Santa Lucia, Score, Mahima and many others were very evident for the purchase of common goods and storage mostly during the quarantine periods of Covid- 19.
- The recreation sports ground by the City Council of most of the regions (Parcours Vitas) is very beneficial to health and wellbeing of the users.
- The putting in place of Police posts and the Gendarmerie brigades and other security guards guarantee our security and wellbeing of citizens in the communities.

* Distance learning during Covid-1669

- Some agencies helped in the creation of television educational programmes for lessons to be taught over the media, like CRTV. They programmed distance learning which has helped pupils The Lancet report found that mental health concerns could be influenced by stressors associated with quarantine, such as fear, frustration, financial loss and stigma associated with contracting the disease. (*Karen Gilchrist 11th March 2020*).
- Students to continue learning and write their exams during the temporally closures of schools within the pandemic crises.
- Implementation of the preventive measures of COVID-19 by some agencies as announced by the Prime Minister, Chief Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute on the 17th March 2020 at 5pm, over the CRTV and communicated the preventive measures from the Head of State to Cameroonians. Some agencies make sure that the measures are respected and practised like:

- Providing masks for the workers and ensuring their use
- Regular hand washing
- Use of hand sanitizers when necessary
- Distance keeping of 1 meter when in a group and amongst people
- Reporting to appropriate centers in case of signs and symptoms, etc.

Travelling prohibited

Influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on travelling movements.

Prohibition of travelling from one country to another has indeed affected the socio-economic of most business people and travelling. Most of them can no longer continue with their businesses. Some order goods and can't be transported, hence their income generating activities are down leading to stress, low mood, consequently mental disorder are being developed by most without strong emotions, with family crises arising due to poor living.

As regards to the preventive measures, the US Air Force took a decision that as from the 26th of January 2021, all passengers, each from 2 years and above should present a COVID19 negative test result before entering the United States of America.

***Campaigns of COVID-19 Preventive Measures**

Most agencies do a lot of campaign of COVID-19 preventive measures by using campaign vans and loud speakers along the streets, communities, markets and even in churches. This has brought about awareness and positive behavioural changes.

***Quarantine period due to COVID-19**

*Quarantine is a state or period of isolation of people or animals to avoid contamination and spread of diseases during outbreaks of epidemics and pandemics.

Although this period is helpful, but tiring; very stressful and economically there is a lot of financial constraints. This is confirmed by a recent study from medical journal The Lancet notes that the psychological impact of quarantine can be great, resulting in a range of mental health concerns, from anxiety and anger to sleep disturbances, depression and post-traumatic stress disorders. That indeed, separate studies of guaranteed patients of SARS, a previous corona virus outbreak in 2003 found 10% and 29% suffered post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

***Creation of Microfinances**

Microfinances constitute 10% of the national economy of our country Cameroon. Most microfinances are created for job opportunities and help in financing community projects. They also borrow money to people to enable them finance their projects, shops, restaurants and other co-operations, all these helping the people to progress and live happily leading to the wellbeing of your community.

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