

The Correlation Between Mental Health and Physical Activity

Introduction

The relationship between mental health and physical activity is a subject that is gaining momentum and significance within the healthcare domain. The issue under consideration pertains to the pervasiveness and ramifications of mental health conditions on the well-being of individuals. As per the report by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001), mental health disorders impact roughly 25% of the global population, thereby emerging as a primary cause of impairment. The aforementioned disorders have the potential to result in various difficulties, such as compromised social capabilities, reduced efficiency, and a decline in overall well-being (Taylor, 1985). Concurrently, it has been acknowledged that engaging in physical activity is an essential element in preserving one's general health and welfare (Bell et al., 2019). Comprehending the correlation between mental health and physical activity is paramount in formulating efficacious tactics to foster mental wellness and enhance the quality of life of individuals.

This subject matter interests me as I have observed the significant impact of mental health disorders on individuals within my immediate social circle. The observation of loved ones grappling with anxiety and depression has been made, with the consequent impact on their daily functioning and interpersonal connections. The personal experience underscores the pressing necessity to investigate efficacious interventions and tactics for advancing mental wellness. Acknowledging the plausible influence of physical activity on mental health has instigated my inclination to delve further into comprehending this association and investigate methods of integrating physical activity as a mechanism for fostering mental wellness.

Comprehending the association between mental well-being and physical exercise holds noteworthy ramifications for healthcare, education, and the broader societal context. According to Saxena et al. (2005), healthcare professionals can enhance their treatment plans by acknowledging the link between physical activity and health and incorporating physical activity as supplementary therapy. According to Marconcin et al. (2022), educational establishments have the potential to introduce initiatives that prioritize physical activity, thereby augmenting the psychological well-being of students and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, it is argued that society can derive advantages from heightened consciousness and providing support mechanisms that foster physical activity as a preventive and therapeutic measure for mental health ailments (Taylor, 1985).

Causes

Comprehending the fundamental elements contributing to the correlation between mental health and physical activity is crucial in formulating effective interventions and strategies. This section will examine various factors that contribute to the issue, encompassing biological, psychological, and social dimensions, and will also integrate subjective viewpoints.

Biological factors significantly influence the correlation between mental health and physical activity. As concluded by various research, physical activity triggers the release of endorphins, a neurotransmitter that facilitates positive emotions and overall feelings of wellness. According to Saxena et al. (2005), endorphins function as innate mood elevators, mitigating stress, anxiety, and depression. In addition, exercising regularly escalates the neurotrophic factors, such as brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which support brain cell development and cognitive function (Marconcin et al., 2022).

In addition, it has been observed that genetic components can impact an individual's vulnerability to mental health conditions and their reaction to physical exercise. According to Taylor (1985), specific genetic variations have the potential to influence the synthesis and control of neurotransmitters implicated in regulating mood, thereby exerting an impact on an individual's psychological well-being. The correlation between mental health and physical activity may have a genetic component; as Marconcin et al. (2022) suggested, genetic factors can impact an individual's inclination to participate in physical activity.

Psychological variables also contribute to the association between mental well-being and physical exercise. Chekroud et al. (2018) have noted that individuals with mental health disorders may encounter obstacles and difficulties that impede their participation in physical activity. According to Bell et al. (2019), fatigue, low motivation, and diminished interest can challenge individuals in commencing and maintaining consistent exercise regimens.

Social factors also influence the correlation between mental health and physical activity. According to Saxena et al. (2005), social support systems are essential in enhancing mental health and promoting engagement in physical activities. According to Ohrnberger et al. (2017), individuals with robust social networks and support systems are more inclined to participate in physical activity, which can favor their mental well-being. On the other hand, those who do not have sufficient social support may encounter more obstacles in engaging in physical activity, which may result in unfavorable mental health consequences (Chekroud et al., 2018).

The correlation between mental health and physical activity is complex and interrelated, with multiple contributing factors. This assertion is based on my perspective. The intricate nature of the issue is underscored by the involvement of biological, psychological, and social factors in

shaping the relationship. Comprehensively comprehending and addressing these underlying factors can result in all-encompassing interventions that foster psychological wellness via bodily exertion. Developing customized strategies that target specific obstacles, offer communal reinforcement, and augment mental fortitude is paramount in fostering enduring participation in physical exercise.

Mainstream Attitude

Societal attitudes, cultural standards, and dominant perceptions of mental health influence the general perspective regarding the association between mental health and physical activity. Throughout history, mental health has been characterized by stigmatization and misunderstandings, resulting in unfavorable attitudes and discriminatory practices. Recently, there has been an increasing acknowledgment of the significance of mental health and its influence on general welfare (Ohrnberger et al., 2017). The perception of mental health and its correlation with physical activity has gradually transformed, albeit with persistent challenges and misconceptions, as noted by Chekroud et al. (2018). Contemporary perspectives regarding the association between mental health and physical activity have become increasingly favorable, recognizing the potential advantages physical activity can confer on mental wellness. In addition, there is an increasing acknowledgment that mental health disorders are prevalent and warrant a compassionate and supportive approach. There is a current trend in mainstream society toward reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues and encouraging open dialogue regarding mental wellness, as noted by Bell and colleagues in 2019.

Despite the increasing awareness of the importance of mental health and physical activity, there are still prevalent challenges and misconceptions in mainstream attitudes toward

these issues. Individuals may need to recognize or undervalue the prospective advantages of engaging in physical activity to enhance mental wellness. The aforementioned phenomenon may be ascribed to insufficient consciousness, restricted instruction, or adherence to conventional convictions prioritizing medical treatments over lifestyle elements (Ohrnberger et al., 2017).

The current societal perspective on the relationship between mental health and physical activity is progressively favorable. However, there exists a necessity for additional instruction and consciousness-raising efforts to tackle the extant obstacles and misunderstandings. The rationale for favorable dispositions is grounded in a significant corpus of empirical studies that establish a link between psychological well-being and bodily exertion (Saxena et al., 2005). Numerous research endeavors have consistently demonstrated that maintaining a physical exercise routine can yield favorable outcomes on mental well-being, such as mitigating indications of depression, anxiety, and stress (Bell et al., 2019). The aforementioned results offer a strong foundation for advocating physical activity as a crucial element in managing and preventing mental health.

Organizations

Several entities within the United States are committed to tackling the association between mental health and physical activity. These entities are pivotal in increasing consciousness, furnishing assistance, and advocating for measures that amplify psychological wellness via bodily exertion.

Mental Health America (MHA) is a non-governmental organization of national scope in the United States that has been actively engaged in advocating for mental health and promoting mental well-being for more than a century. The MHA endeavors to tackle the association

between mental health and physical activity using its all-encompassing mental health promotion, instruction, and assistance strategy. Mental Health America's principal objective is to advance mental health and avert mental health disorders through diverse initiatives. The organization's objective is to enhance the general public's cognizance of the significance of mental wellness and encourage individuals to seek assistance and reinforcement when necessary proactively. Furthermore, the organization MHA endeavors to eradicate the negative connotations associated with mental health and enhance the availability of superior mental health care provisions (About Us, n.d.).

The Mental Health Association (MHA) offers diverse services to individuals, communities, and professionals to promote mental well-being and advocate for physical activity as a viable strategy for enhancing mental health. Mental Health America (MHA) provides educational initiatives and resources to promote mental health awareness, encompassing the interrelation between mental health and physical activity (Mental Health America, 2017). MHA espouses policies that endorse mental health and facilitate physical activity as a constituent of mental health care. The organization endeavors to impact legislative processes, advocate for increased funding for mental health initiatives and enhance accessibility to resources that foster physical activity (About Us, n.d.).

In addition, the MHA offers screening instruments and various resources. The platform offers digital resources for mental health screening, enabling individuals to evaluate their psychological state. The aforementioned instruments can detect possible indications of mental health issues and offer direction on obtaining suitable assistance (About Us, n.d.).

Notwithstanding its significant contributions, Mental Health America encounters specific obstacles in tackling the association between mental health and physical activity. A notable obstacle pertains to the persistent social disapproval associated with mental health, which may impede individuals from pursuing assistance and participating in physical exercise (Mental Health America, 2017). The MHA is committed to addressing stigma through its educational initiatives and advocacy endeavors.

A notable obstacle pertains to the restricted availability of resources and prospects for engaging in physical activity, particularly in marginalized communities. Socioeconomic factors, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted access to secure environments for physical activity pose hindrances for individuals who could potentially reap the benefits of exercise in enhancing their mental health. MHA aims to tackle these obstacles by promoting community-based initiatives and advocating for fair and impartial access to resources.

Mental Health America can be a beneficial resource for health education curricula exploring the relationship between mental health and physical activity. Mental Health America (2017) suggests that educators integrate MHA's educational programs, screening tools, and resources into their curriculum to enhance awareness and furnish evidence-based information regarding the advantages of physical activity for mental well-being. Moreover, by utilizing resources provided by MHA, students can acquire information regarding the association between mental health and physical activity, cultivate the ability to evaluate their mental well-being, and comprehend the significance of seeking assistance when necessary (About Us, n.d.). Moreover, deliberations pertaining to MHA's advocacy endeavors can embolden students to assume the role of change agents in advancing mental health and physical fitness in their communities.

Contribution as Health Educator

As a health educator, I play a crucial role in promoting health and well-being among individuals and communities. When addressing the correlation between mental health and physical activity, I can make several significant contributions to improve understanding, awareness, and behavior change.

One essential contribution I can make as a health educator is providing health education and raising awareness about the correlation between mental health and physical activity. By utilizing evidence-based resources and peer-reviewed articles, I can develop educational materials and workshops to educate students, teachers, and parents on the benefits of physical activity for mental well-being. I will emphasize the role of physical activity in reducing stress, improving mood, and enhancing overall mental health.

As a health educator, I can advocate for integrating physical activity into the curriculum across various subjects. By collaborating with teachers and school administrators, I can design lesson plans and activities incorporating physical activity, such as movement breaks during classroom sessions or physical education classes focusing on mental health benefits. This integration will reinforce the understanding that physical activity is not solely for physical fitness but also for mental well-being.

Creating a supportive environment that promotes physical activity and mental health is crucial for the well-being of students. I can work with school staff to develop policies and guidelines that encourage regular physical activity breaks, access to safe recreational spaces, and mental health resources. By fostering a supportive environment, students will feel empowered to

engage in physical activity and seek help for mental health concerns without fear of stigma or judgment.

As a health educator, I can contribute to the continuous improvement of interventions by conducting evaluations and monitoring the impact of physical activity on students' mental health. By collecting data, such as self-reported mental well-being, stress levels, and engagement in physical activity, I can assess the effectiveness of educational programs and initiatives. This evaluation process will provide valuable insights to refine interventions and tailor them to the specific needs of the student population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, mental health and physical exercise majorly affect healthcare, education, and society. Mental health issues impact a large section of the worldwide population and cause many problems. Physical exercise, however, is vital for good health. Biological, psychological, and social aspects explain the mental health-physical exercise link. Complexity highlights the necessity for thorough knowledge.

Mainstream views on mental health and physical exercise have changed. Mental health has become less stigmatized and misunderstood. However, challenges and misperceptions remain, requiring more education and awareness. Simultaneously, organizations like Mental Health America are working to promote mental health. MHA's complete strategy raises awareness, eliminates stigma, and improves mental health care access. At the same time, it comes under the responsibility of health educators to make significant contributions to mental health and physical exercise because health education and promoting physical exercise for mental health are crucial.

In summary, the correlation between mental health and physical activity is undeniable. Recognizing this connection and implementing strategies to promote mental well-being through physical activity can transform individuals' lives. By addressing the problem, understanding the causes, challenging mainstream attitudes, utilizing organizations like MHA, and contributing as health educators, we can create a society that prioritizes mental well-being and recognizes physical activity's power to promote overall health and happiness.

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