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PSYCHO-SOCIAL MEASURES FOR CULTIVATING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIVIDUALS FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE.

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Abstract

Good mental health promotes interpersonal relationship, civic engagements and responsibility as well as socio-economic development and therefore is paramount to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in any nation, state or community. Unfortunately, the mental health of some residents in Anambra state has been attacked in recent times as a result of unprecedented challenges ranging from insecurity, heightened inflation, overwhelming poverty, hunger, untold hardship and unemployment among others. The challenges which seem enormous exert pressure, stress, anxiety and depression on some individuals. It also triggers extreme behavioural acts such as suicidal ideation and suicide on the below average individuals' thus erupting poor mental health. Poor mental health breeds dysfunctional and chaotic communities. Poor mental health hinders adaptation, adjustment and collaboration which are crucial for societal growth and development. This paper however tries to suggest psycho-social measures for cultivating positive mental health in individuals for sustainable communities in Anambra state. Among other such psycho-social measures include building of emotional resilience, encouraging positive actions such as self expression, developing coping skills and developing a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Keywords: Psycho-social, good mental health and sustainable communities.

Introduction

Good mental health guarantees improved mood, reduced anxiety, logical thinking and reasoning, deeper and sustained relationships, improved self esteem and self confidence which are vital for sustainable communities. Family, social, educational, cultural and political challenges can have different effects on the mental health of concerned individuals. Put in another way, every aspect of the environment has either positive or negative influence on man. This includes our homes, friends, school, community, church and the larger society. The stress and anxiety in everyday life to major societal issues impact our mental health. Life experiences, upbringing and environment all affect our mental health and influence our thoughts, relationships, actions and feelings.

Good mental health promotes interpersonal relationship, civic engagements and responsibility as well as socio-economic development and therefore is paramount to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in any nation, state or community. Unfortunately, the mental health of some residents in Anambra state has been attacked in recent times as a result of unprecedented challenges ranging from insecurity, heightened inflation, overwhelming poverty, hunger, untold hardship and unemployment among others. The challenges which seem enormous exert pressure, stress, anxiety and depression on some individuals. It also triggers extreme behavioural acts such as suicidal ideation and suicide on the below average individuals' thus erupting poor mental health. Poor mental health breeds dysfunctional and chaotic communities. Poor mental health hinders adaptation, adjustment and collaboration which are crucial for societal growth and development

No society can thrive in its sustainable goals development without citizens who are in good mental health. No wonder, the World Health Organization (2022) emphasized that there can be no health or sustainable development without proper mental health and such mental health is one of the most critical pillars in creating a sustainable world in the future. World Health Organization concluded by saying that if mental health is good, sustainability will follow naturally.

Definition of Basic Concepts

To enhance understanding of this study, there is need to explain major concepts which include: Psychosocial, mental health and sustainable development.

Psychosocial

From the researchers' perspective, the psychological construct of psychosocial looks at individuals in the context of the combined influence that psychological factors and the surrounding social environment have on their physical and mental wellness and their ability to function. Psychosocial refers to the combination of psychological factors (relating to individuals thought, attitude, feelings, emotions and behaviour) and social factors (relating to the social environment such as family, friends and community) that interact and influence on individuals mental and emotional wellbeing, social functioning and general life quality. The psychosocial is the totality of the psychological and emotional aspects of an individual's interactions with others and their larger social aspects.

Some authors and researchers have attempted definition of the concept psychosocial based on their various perspectives. Carnevale and Cheprasov (2023) defined psychosocial as intersection of an

individual thoughts and needs and external social factors which includes how a person adjusts and accepts their own thoughts and behaviours in connection to the external world. Carnevale et al asserted that the psychosocial meaning focuses on the internal mental dimension of a person's life and how it guides the person's relationship with family, friends and community. Vizzotto, De Oliveira, Elkis, Cordeiro and Buchain (2013) noted that psychosocial is a word used to explain the effect of social factors on an individual's mental health and behaviour, the relationship between interpersonal psychological and environmental aspects as well as an individual's psychological development in relation to his/her social and cultural environment.

Mental Health

Mental health is a basic human right and paramount for individual, social, economic and political development of any community. Mental health as explained by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023) include our emotional, psychological and social well being. It influences our thinking, feeling and action and also determines how we handle challenges, relate to others and make healthy choices. Leonard (2023) gave credence to the above definition but added that the quality of a person's mental health is often measured by his/her level of adaptation to every day as well as allows people to be productive. World Health Organization (2022) noted that mental health connotes a state of mental well being that enables people to cope with the challenges of life, realize their abilities, learn well, work well and contribute to their community. They further observed that mental health is an integral component of health well being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decision, build relationships and shape the world we live in.

Sustainable Community

Sustainable community is derived from two words namely: Community and Sustainable. Understanding of these two words is therefore crucial. Reimer (2023) explained the word community as a diverse social group which shares the same values, beliefs, perspectives and identity. Reimer also defined sustainable as the ability to consistently maintain and/or carry forward at a given level. Lowri (2021) explained sustainable communities as places where people want to live and work now and in the future. They meet the varied needs of immediate and future residents and are mindful of the environment thereby contributing to a high quality of life. Lowri outlined three main concepts of a sustainable community to include:

- Meeting social needs.
- Protecting and enhancing the environment.
- Promoting economic success

Reimer (2023) observed that a sustainable community as a type of community with the common idea and purpose of making efficient and effective use of natural resources. AboitizEyes (2022) defined sustainable community as one that uses its resources to meet present needs while ensuring that adequate resources are still available to sustain future generations. Mihalik (2019) explained that sustainable communities are planned and built to promote sustainable living in the form of a healthy environment, a strong economy and wellbeing to residents. Mihalik (2019) enumerated the components of a sustainable community to include: Energy efficiency, innovation and spirit, stewardship and diversity.

Energy Efficiency- Sustainable communities strive for neat and orderly environmental such as low air pollution, green house emissions to provide better social, economic and environmental returns.

Innovation and Spirit- The community leaders such as traditional chiefs, President Generals and Youth leaders cultivate a spirit of proactive problem-solving in order to build sustainable practices. Also members of the community must always be discovering, learning and innovating as new developments unfold.

Stewardship- Sustainable is about preserving resources fr future generations. As such sustainable communities must live within their means.

Diversity- Sustainable communities are comprised of many people, cultures and economic backgrounds. Sustainable community leaders therefore celebrate and promote ethnic, cultural, economic and biological diversity.
In summary, sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, presently and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life. Sustainable communities have three main objectives namely:

- A healthy environment
- A vibrant economy and
- Social well being

Review of Literature

The review of literature is done under the following sub-headings namely:

- Origin of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG3)

Origin of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations launched the Millenuim Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000 as a blueprint for national/global development. The MDGs has eight goals targeted at addressing pressing issues ranging from hunger, poverty and disease. The MDGs accomplished great feat but was criticized for such reasons like:

- Narrow in focus /being primarily based on poverty reduction.
- Primarily targeting at only developing nations/lack of inclusivity among others.

These criticisms simply implies the need for a development goal that should embrace wide content coverage and large global inclusion and thus the birth of a successor termed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations Development Programme (2022) noted that the SDGs were conceived at the United Nations Conference on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro in 2015. The objective of the conference was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing the globe. The conference

adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations SDGs comprised 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets that all the 191 United Nation member states have endorsed to achieve by the year 2030. The SDGs were more comprehensive than the MDGs. As pointed out earlier, the MDGs primarily focused on poverty reduction while SDGs addressed global issues ranging from poverty, hunger, health and wellbeing, education, equality, clean water and climate action among others. United Nations Sustainable Development Group (2022) noted that the SDGs aimed at securing the rights and wellbeing of everyone on a healthy and thriving planet. They further opined that the agenda remains the world roadmap for ending poverty, protecting the planet and tackling inequalities.

The 17 SDGs, the bedrock of the agenda, provides the most practical and effective pathway to to solve the causes of violent conflict, human rights abuses, climate change and environmental degradation. The SDGs also has the objective of carrying everyone along. The SDGs reflect on understanding that sustainable development everywhere must integrate economic growth, social wellbeing and environmental protection. The 17 goals include:

- No poverty
- Zero hunger
- Good health and wellbeing
- Quality education
- Gender equality
- Clean water and sanitation
- Affordable and clean energy
- Decent work and economic growth
- Industry. Innovation and infrastructure
- Reduced inequalities
- Sustainable cities and communities
- Responsible consumption and production
- Climate action
- Life below water
- Life on land
- Peace, justice and strong institutions and
- Partnership for the goals.

The 17 SDGs were structured around the 5 pillars of the 2030 agenda namely: People, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The 5 Ps highlight that the 17 SDGs are dependent on each other and thus the progress of one must balance and support the progress on another. Kruger (2024) emphasized conservation, community, culture and commerce as four major considerations in sustainable planning.

Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG3)

This research work is anchored on SDG 3 which is good health and wellbeing. Promoting health and wellbeing is one of the 17 national/global goals that make up the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. United Nations has outlined 13 targets and 28 indicators for SDG3. Targets represent the purpose and indicators represent the metrics by which the globe/world aim to track whether these targets are accomplished. UNICEF (2021) emphasized that Goal 3 is geared towards ensuring healthy living and wellbeing for all ages across the globe. UNICEF further stressed that good health and wellbeing is vital at every stage of life from cradle to grave and thus SDG 3 addresses all major health priorities such as reproduction, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, communicable and non-communicable diseases, universal accessibility to quality and affordable medicines and vaccines.

Given credence to the above assertion, WHO (2021) asserted that health has a central place in SDG3 and all other 16 SDGs are directly related to health or will contribute to health indirectly. WHO perception of mental health include the followings:

- Mental health is more than absence of mental illness.
- Mental health is an integral part of health.
- There is no health without mental health.
- Socioeconomic, biological and environmental factors determines mental health.

The objective of SDG 3 is to prevent untold suffering from preventable diseases and premature death by focusing on key targets that boost the health of citizens in every nation. Good health and wellbeing is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans for thinking, relationships, accommodation, growth and satisfied living. On this note therefore, the promotion, protection and restoration of mental health can be regarded as a vital concern for individuals, communities and societies. Thus this paper is aimed at suggesting psychosocial measures for cultivating positive mental health in individuals for sustainable communities in Anambra state.

Relevance of Mental Health to Sustainable Communities

From the review of literature it is glaring that without people with sound and healthy mental health there will be no sustainable communities, therefore the researchers deduce that "Individuals with good mental health equal to sustainable communities while individuals with poor mental health equal to unsustainable communities". Mental health plays a significant role in determining the extent of involvement of individuals within their communities. Involvement here implies all rounds (physical, mental, social and financial). Community activities requires energy, motivation, social skills and good cognitive functioning all of which can be adversely affected by a range of mental health conditions. To buttress this point, an individual who is health challenged (with one ailment, sickness or disease or in the extreme bedridden), emotionally challenged (drown in pain, anxiety, frustration, depression and stress), financially challenged (cannot pay his community dues, cannot sponsor projects or make donations for projects) and mentally challenged (lacks ability to reason and make logical inferences) is a social misfit. When individuals are mentally healthy to participate, volunteer and make contributions to community projects, the entire community thrives. Mental

health conditions such as ill health, emotional pains and mood disorders among others are hindrances to community sustainable developments.

Giving credence to this assertion is Alyssa (2024) who observed that mental health is inseparable from sustainable communities. Alyssa explained further that a positive mental health can enhance the quality of daily experiences while a negative mental health state can introduce challenges and disruptions. Therefore nurturing and maintaining good mental health is paramount for productive and constructive society. Supporting the above statement is Votruba, Eaton, Prince and Thornicroft (2014) that mental health plays an indispensable role in efforts to achieve social inclusion and equity, universal health coverage, access to justice and human rights as well as sustainable development. Alyssa (2024) opined that mental health has a major influence on the daily lives of individuals, imposing a pivotal function in their overall well being and functioning. It impacts on the mental, emotional and behavioural dimensions of an individual's life. Alyssa went further to explain that mental health wheels tremendous influence on daily life thus affecting an individual's thoughts, emotions and overall well being.

In summary mental health is vital for sustainable communities as it empowers the following: Emotional regulation, cognitive functioning and social interactions. Now let's explain them briefly:

Emotional Regulation

Alyssa (2024) opined that good mental health fosters the ability to manage stress, regulate emotions and experience a range of feelings healthily and adaptively. Poor mental health can lead to mood swings, intense anxiety or persistent sadness that can impact everyday emotions and behaviour.

Cognitive Functioning

Alyssa (2024) observed that mental health impacts cognitive functioning such as concentration, memory, problem solving and decision making. Mental health challenges such as frustration, anxiety, stress and depression can lead to difficulties in these areas.

Social Interaction

Alyssa (2024) asserted that mental health disorders lead to social withdrawal, interpersonal conflicts and feelings of isolation thereby making it impossible or rather challenging for individuals to maintain or create healthy relationships.

Psychological Measures for Cultivating Positive Mental Health in Individuals for Sustainable Communities.

The following psychological measures could be effective for cultivating positive mental health in individuals for sustainable communities.

Positive Thinking

Biggins (2020) noted that positive thinking is important in maintaining good mental health. Restructuring of one's thought by deliberating more on positive issues leads to improved overall well being and also reduce stress and anxiety.

Positive Action

One of the effective ways of cultivating positive mental health is focusing on the actions we can take to improve our wellbeing. This could be reducing our exposure to negative news, negative stories and sad events.

Positive Interaction

There is no doubt that social communications triggers joy, happiness and forgetting of sorrowful moments. What we are saying in essence here it that social relationships and social support is vital for good mental health.

Self Compassion

One of the best antidotes to stress and anxiety is self compassion. This is a mind full reflective practice that helps us to acknowledge the fact that sometimes life can be tough. The key for self compassion is not to deny that sad events are happening, but to recognize they are perfectly normal. The key is not to be depressed by the situation but rather cultivate warmth and kindness to oneself and to others.

Building Emotional Resilience/Manage your Emotions

Mental Health Foundations (2021) noted that feeling very upset can interfere with our lives thus making it hard to think clearly or work, relax, study, sleep or deal with other people. From this fact, emotion control can help avert some mental health challenges such as stress. Melinda Smith, Lawrence and Jeanne (2024) opined that understanding and accepting our emotions especially the unpleasant ones many of us try to ignore can make a huge difference in our ability to manage stress and balance our moods.

Building of Positive Self Concept and Self Esteem

Tartakovsky (2022) noted that constantly consuming information about other people's lives may cause someone to compare themselves and promote feelings of low self worth, which increases feelings of anxiety and depression.

Social Measures for Cultivating Positive Mental Health in Individuals for Sustainable Communities.

The following social measures could be effective for cultivating positive mental health in individuals for sustainable communities.

Strengthen your Relationships

Tartakovsky (2022) noted that humans are social creatures and strong relationships can have a positive influence on our mental health in various ways. For instance, Tartakovsky explained that friendship can ease feelings of loneliness, make it easier to get emotional support, add meaning to your life.

Building Social or Relationship Skills

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023) noted that social connectedness influences our minds, bodies and behaviours, all of which influence our health and life expectancy, Social connectedness can lead to longevity, better health and improved wellbeing.

Be Yourself and Shun Greed.

Living above one's ability, capacity and income are likely causes of some mental health conditions such as anxiety and stress. Human wants are limitless and therefore to build good mental health an individual should go for pressing needs and not wants. Avoid covetousness and greed. Be yourself and live within your income. This will breed relaxed mind, longevity and sound mental wellbeing.

Building Conflict Resolution Skills

Psychologists believe that no two individuals are the same including identical twins. Therefore, because of varied thoughts, feelings, opinions and behaviours, conflict is part of every community. Okeke, Anierobi and Ezennaka (2021) elaborating on the above statement noted that because no two individuals are the same, there is bound to be conflict, strife, argument and misunderstanding due to different perceptions, opinion, interpretation and understanding of events and situations. It will be strange and abnormal to see a community without conflict. Giving credence to this assertion is Okeke and Joe-Akunne (2020) that man's imperfection has made conflict inevitable in any human relationship. Developing conflict coping, management and resolution skills are vital for positive mental health. Bitterness and anger are dangerous to health.

Building Problem Solving Skills

Okeke, Agu and Onyekwere (2023) observed that problems and challenges and normal to life just as eating, breathing, sleeping and relaxation. What is abnormal is inability to overcome or succumb to challenges. It is cowardice, immaturity and living without vision that will propel anyone existing on this planet earth to believe that life is without challenges. In reality, challenges, obstacles and problems are important and normal part of life as well as human growth. Okeke et al further emphasized that specifically, challenges builds mental, emotional, social and psychological growth. Mentally, challenges empower logical thinking, reasoning, calculation, problem solving skills. Emotionally, positive emotional skill is developed through challenges. Socially, good relationship, good social skills and communication are triggered through challenges and psychologically, challenges empowers the development of positive self esteem, positive self concept and resilience capacity in an individual.

Building resilience in time of trouble is vital for sound health. Avoid complaining, being antagonistic, transfer of aggressions and moody state for all these are implicated in mental health conditions. Sit up and face every challenge joyfully and hopefully to secure your mental well being.

Summary

Cultivating positive mental health in individuals is vital for sustainable communities. The major concepts in a sustainable community include meeting social needs, protecting and enhancing the environment and promoting economic success and this could only be achieved through vibrant members who are mentally, socially and emotionally sound. Sustainable communities are achieved through the virtues of tolerance, understanding, social interaction, resilience and collaboration and it takes possession of good/sound mental health to exhibit these community building attributes.

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