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## Quality of Life and Mental Health: a Review.

Mohammad Reza Paknahad<sup>1</sup>, Maryam Sharafi<sup>2</sup>, Mehrafrouz Daneshian<sup>3</sup>, Mohammad Reza Ataollahi<sup>1</sup>, and Abbas Paknahad<sup>3\*</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Non communicable Diseases Research Center, Fasa University of Medical Sciences, Fasa, Iran.

<sup>2</sup>Farhangian fars University, Salman farsi higher education center, Shiraz, Iran.

<sup>3</sup>Student Research Committee, Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences, Bandar Abbas, Iran.

### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the various aspects of quality of life and mental health and the relationship between these two concepts and shows that quality of life is a broad concept that is associated with mental health in a complex manner. In this paper, data were collected using keywords including health, mental health, mental, health, society, behavior, community, global health, quality, disease, life, physical, and mental through searching, studying and analyzing the recent articles published in reliable journals and by using reliable scientific websites. Efforts to examine and improve the quality of life play a major role in the psychological and social health of the communities. On the other hand, mental health is regarded as an essential factor for promotion of quality of life. In Iran, mental health has less been addressed due to other health priorities, such as infectious epidemics in the past and or chronic diseases in the present day.

**Keywords:** health, mental health, quality of life

*\*Corresponding author*

## INTRODUCTION

In the present era, mental health is considered one of the most important indicators of health in the communities and has raised the interest of psychiatrists, psychologists and other behavioral and social scientists in the world [1]. Mental health implies that the individual can properly perform his daily activities, establish communication with family members and the environment, and does not demonstrate the behaviors considered inappropriate by the culture and society. Therefore, mental health is the knowledge and art that help people adopt psychologically and emotionally suitable methods to adapt to their environment and choose more appropriate solution to their problems because if people are constantly threatened, they can no longer successfully fulfill their social responsibilities [1]. A recent report by the World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that mental disorders have affected about 10% of adults with an increasing incidence trend [2]. According to the available findings with regard to the global burden of disease attributable to mental disorders, which is projected to raise from 10.5% in 1996 to 15% in 2020, WHO regards improving the mental health a priority for low and middle income countries [3]. Mental health goes beyond the absence of a specific psychological condition and is affected by social, cultural, health and educational conditions [4]. Mental health along with physical, mental and economic welfare forms an important part of life [5]. Health is a human right and a social purpose. It is necessary to meet the basic needs of human and improve the quality of life and should be accessible to all people. A broader sense of health has recently emerged that includes quality of life [6]. Quality of life is an important indicator that has to be measured in health research [7]. Researchers believe that quality of life and efforts to promote it play an important role in individual and public health [8]. Lengthened life, improved health care and increased quality of life is increasingly becoming important [9]. Nowadays, the concept of quality of life is considered a basic indicator of health and is of special importance since it includes multiple dimensions such as the physiological, functional and existential aspects of the individual [10].

### Health

Health is a multidimensional concept that, in addition to not being patient, includes feelings of happiness and well-being [11]. WHO defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or disability?” An important consequence of this definition is that mental health is defined as a concept beyond the absence of mental disorders or mental disabilities. Mental health is also defined as a state of well-being, in which a person understands his potentials, can adapt to the stressors in his life, work efficiency, and is able to contribute to his community. In this positive sense, mental health is fundamental to the individual’s well-being and effective functioning of a society. Poor mental health has been associated with stressful work conditions, gender discrimination, social exclusion, unhealthy lifestyle, violence, physical illness, and human rights violations [12].

### Concept of Mental Health

Mental health has a history equal to that of human; however, its physical aspect has been generally considered, and less attention has been paid to its mental aspect. Health is more of a dynamic concept than being a constant one [13]. Mental health is one of the criteria to be considered in determining the general health, whose concept includes feeling of well-being and confidence about self-efficacy, self-reliance, competition capacity, intergenerational belonging, and self-actualization of intellectual and emotional potentials. Mental health plays an important role in ensuring a dynamic and efficient society [14, 15].

### Definition of Mental Health

So far, there have been many attempts to define mental health. The concept of mental health was first introduced in 1905 with the start of the mental health movement [16]. Man requires mental health, in addition to physical health, to achieve general health [17]. To define the mental health, it is said that an individual that can cope with his deep problems, finds peace with himself and others, not be crippled against his inevitable inner conflicts, and not be rejected by the society is a mentally healthy individual [18]. Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual recognizes his abilities, is able to adapt to the stresses of normal life, can be useful in his job, and cooperate with others as a part of the society [19]. Mental health is an issue that is influential in the development of family and society [20]. Mental health is a state of well-being, in

which the individual recognizes his abilities, is able to response to the stresses of normal life, is able to effectively perform in the society, and can contribute to his society [21].

### Concept of Quality of Life

A model was introduced in 2000 by Schiffer *et al.* to explain the concept of quality of life. Three areas of society, environment and economy are stressed in the model. The advantage of the model is that the interaction between the areas is clearly defined and a picture of the concepts of livability, quality of life, and stability is described in an interaction with each other [22]. Accordingly, recent research on the quality of life has been focused on two major methodologies. The first methodology utilizes measurable social and economic indicators (objective aspects) to reflect the extent the human needs are met, whereas the second methodology shows the levels of happiness and satisfaction (subjective aspects) based on reports on the personal life experiences, which is called subjective well-being [22]. Quality of life is a multidimensional complex concept and includes both objective and subjective factors and is often perceived as a certain perception of the satisfaction in life, physical health, social and family health, hope, etiquette and mental health of the patient [23]. Quality of life is a multi-faceted and relative concept influenced by time, place, and the individual and social values that has both objective and external dimensions and subjective and internal dimensions [24]. Quality of life has attracted a lot of attention in the past 10 years in the form of a scientific concept [25]. It is a multidimensional concept that includes aspects such as physical health, mental health, economic conditions, personal beliefs, and interaction with the environment [26].

Quality of life is the people's feeling about their potentials regarding physical, emotional and social functions. For more than a decade, quality of life has been regarded as a major issue in health care, especially for chronic patients [27]. The concept of quality of life has been used in medical research since 1940 to measure the patients' quality of life [28]. It can be said that concept of quality of life is a complex and multidimensional concept associated with the situation of the population in a specific geographic scale (e.g. a village, town or country). Therefore, it relies on both subjective or qualitative indicators and objective or quantitative indicators [29].

### Definition of Quality of Life

Quality of life is the people's understanding of their position in life with respect to their culture and value systems. It is related to their goals, aspirations and standards [30]. Thus, quality of life can be properly defined by a combination of physical, mental and social well-beings perceived by the individual or group of individuals (such as happiness, satisfaction, pride, health, economic status, educational opportunities, etc.) [31]. In general, the condition of the environment in which people live, such as pollution and quality of housing, as well as some of the traits and characteristics of people, such as health and welfare. MacGregor (1998) defined quality of life as the level of enjoyment of an individual, not just having things that are earned but all the options that he has the opportunity to choose. In other words, quality of life is associated with the freedom to achieve or not to achieve success and the awareness of the real opportunities he has compared to others (Pal, 2005). In another definition, quality of life is a measure of the spiritual, psychological, and material needs of a society and the family, which represents the social and economic characteristics of a region. The quality of rural life is defined as the objective conditions of life of families and villages [24].

WHO provides a comprehensive definition for quality of life? Quality of life is the individual's perception of his current situation with respect to the culture and value system in which he lives and the relationship between these perceptions and his goals, expectations, standards, and priorities. Various factors, such as, economic, cultural and spiritual factors, affect the individual's quality of life. Quality of life is measured with regards to the people's perspective. Although the person may not live a suitable living environment, he can have a deep sense of satisfaction. Self-assessment of health and well-being is a key factor in quality of life studies, making the person's judgment of himself of particular importance [32]. The most common factors associated with quality of life that are examined in studies include demographic variables such as age, social factors, treatment-related issues, such as type of surgery, adjuvant therapy, and duration of follow-up [33]. Although medical interventions affect the quality of life, a part of the changes are due to the demographic, social, psychological, and cultural characteristics [34]. Scientists have proposed various definitions for quality of life; however, all agree on three principles in the concept of quality of life:

- 1) Quality of life is the result of a subjective evaluation, and the patient can judge about his quality of life better than anyone else.
- 2) Quality of life has a dynamic nature rather than a static one, meaning that it changes over time in line with the internal and external changes.
- 3) Quality of life is a multidimensional concept and should be measured from various aspects which form the main focus of the perceptual framework in quality of life research.

Quality of life is a complex issue, which make providing a clear definition for improving the quality of life difficult. However, it can be said that quality of life can be promoted through helping people utilize their potentials by choosing the best way. Quality of life is the best criterion for measuring the individual's ability to successfully cope with real-world challenges [35].

### **Mental Health and Family**

Family is the first place that shapes the personality and mental characteristics of a person and is the first environment that puts children under the supervision and care [36]. Considering that one of the elements of family relationships is support, support reduces the person's stresses and concerns in utilizing some resources. Partnership, cohesion and supervision are also other components of the social and family relationships. Participation and involvement of people in groups define meaningful roles such as family and work roles, etc., while roles create a feeling of value, belonging, and attachment and provide opportunities for friendship and companionship. Trust, as another component of family relationships, makes people more involved in social activities and, thereby, facilitates their access to amenities and health and education facilities. Higher levels of interaction also strengthen social ties and, consequently, extend the scope of that person's social relationship that can be relied on by the person in adverse conditions [37].

### **Gender and Mental Health**

Although all populations are at risk of mental disorders, studies on different populations suggest that the prevalence of mental disorders is significantly higher in women than men. This difference sometimes as high as 2 to 3 times [38], which is observed at the childbearing age. The risk increases after labor [39]. Women are more prone to psychological trauma due to their emotional sensitivity. Although women live longer than men, they are more vulnerable to mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and appetite disorders [40]. While mental health in women brings about happiness and vitality and increases confidence, lack of mental health is associated with anxiety, stress, and hopelessness [41].

### **Mental Health and Non-developed Societies**

Poor social and environmental conditions are important factors that cause stress and threaten mental health. Human health can be affected by these conditions that lead to an imbalance in the physical and mental state [42]. Less attention has been paid to mental health in many countries (especially third world countries) as the main focus has been on other health priorities, such as infectious epidemics in the past or chronic diseases at the present. However, figures and statistics on the prevalence of mental disorders in different countries suggest a crisis of mental health [43]. Focus on the physical, mental, social, and cultural health is a society and provision of the grounds necessary for a vibrant and healthy life guarantee the public health for years to come. Prevention of emotional, anxiety and depression disorders is crucial to achieve such a valuable objective [44].

### **Mental Health and Quality of Life**

WHO defines mental health as an essential and critical factor in the promotion of quality of life. It defines mental health as a state of complete physical, psychological and social health (not merely the absence of disease or disability) [45]. Diseases change people's way of life and lead to reduced self-esteem, increased sense of vulnerability, physical symptoms, as well as disturbed thoughts, in patients. They also disturb daily functions, social activities, and peace of mind and instead raise new role. All these problems, along with the frequent visits to the doctors, high cost of treatments, and the side effects of drugs, reduce patients' quality of life [46]. Addressing people's psychological health and quality of life is one of the most important issues in the positive psychology [47]. This approach focuses on enhancing the human strengths and virtues, makes life worth living, and provides a place for people and communities to succeed [48]. Stressful activities can affect

different aspects of people's quality of life and mental health. These activities force the individual to contacts with other places, people and cultures and cause problems that lead to a reduced mental health [49]. Psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, frustration, fatigue and disability result in physical illness, while such physical symptoms directly and negatively affect the quality of life [50]. Research has shown that there is a relationship between quality of life and physical and mental health. Quality of life is a broad concept that encompasses all aspects of life, including health. The term, which is also used in the various political, social and economic fields, is often addressed in medical studies, and according to most experts, it included physical, psychological, social, physical, and conceptual aspects [32].

### **Mental Health, Quality of Life and Religion**

Many studies have shown that religiousness and attending religious gatherings such as congregational prayer and prayer meetings lead to mental and physical health and improve quality of life and bring positive attitude towards life and its meaningfulness. Religion and religious tendencies reduce anxiety, suicide, drug use, delinquency and depression and increase life satisfaction and social adjustment [51]. Therefore, people who are more religious enjoy higher levels of mental and health and well-being (52). Adjustment, promotion of mental health, and reduction of disease symptoms and discomfort and confusion are among the positive effect of religion [53]. Prayer is a contributing factor in reducing anxiety in patients [54]. Since people are different, a factor that brings comfort and peace to an individual may not have the same effect on someone else. Therefore, spiritual reading or attending religious services are resources that can be utilized by some religious people to mitigate the harm in the face of stressful life events [55].

### **Mental Health, Quality of Life, and Aging Societies**

Increased quality of life, which leads to a lengthened life, is one of the achievements of the past century. Aging is a change that takes place over time and has positive and negative aspects and includes dynamics biological processes of cognition and development of maturity [56]. Seniors can be physically and mentally healthier and livelier through performing suitable activities. It is believed that if seniors' beneficial daily life and activities are disrupted, their physical and mental health will be negatively affected [57]. Studies show that only 1 percent of Iran's national legislation is related to the elderly, of whom 62% is economic, 22% is social, and 16% is related to welfare and health. Such low share suggests that the quality of life among the elderly is not addressed enough in Iran [9].

### **Methods**

In this paper, data were collected by using keywords including health, mental health, mental, health, society, behavior, community, global health, quality, disease, life, and physical and mental and by searching, studying and analyzing the recent articles published in reliable journals and by using reliable scientific websites.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Research has shown that there is a relationship between quality of life and physical and mental health. Quality of life is a broad concept that encompasses all aspects of life, including health.

And since health, a as a general issue, includes both physical and mental health, mental health is a branch of health concerned with the prevention of mental disorders and maintaining emotional health. Having four aims of potential prosperity, happiness, harmonious development and efficient life, this science tries to provide conditions in healthy people through training mental health workers so that citizens can adapt to home, school, community, workplace and, ultimately, themselves.

On the other hand, quality of life improvement, particularly in the mental health area, is essential, while mental health is provided through developing indicators of quality of life. Mental health is also one of the aspects of quality of life through which quality of life is measured in human societies. An appropriate mental health in these communities indicates the quality of life, whereas poor mental health indicates poor quality of life. People's understanding and perception of their health is critically important in the assessment of the current condition and evaluation of suitable interventions and health care. Quality of life is the feeling of

happiness and life satisfaction and is associated with factors such as age, culture, gender, education, social status, diseases, and social environment.

It can also be added that health of a society depends on the health of its people, while public health relies on families, in which the mental, emotional, educational, social and economic needs are adequately met. Family is the first place that shapes the psychological characteristics and personality traits of people and is the first social environment that puts children under supervision and care. Therefore, families affect personality and social development of people more than any other environment. Thus, any issue that threatens the natural and normal functioning of families is regarded as a factor that threatens people's mental health.

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