

Acupuncturist's Perspective on Psychological Health

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to understand the perspective of Acupuncturists towards psychological health. Recent literature has shown that Acupuncture can be used to treat depression, anxiety and PTSD; however, not many studies have been conducted in terms of understanding psychological health and well-being in general. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on 11 participants from South India who practiced Indian Acupuncture. Grounded theory laid the foundation of this study, and the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Five themes were identified – holistic entity, mind morbid, flow of energy, healthy mind and basis of treatment. This study can be used as a basis to conduct more research in the field of psychological health using acupuncture alone or in combination with psychotherapy.

Keywords: *Acupuncture, Indian Acupuncture, Psychological Health, Mental Health*

Acupuncture is a traditional system of medicine, originated from China, and it involves stimulating certain points on the body to treat various medical conditions. It is based on the law of five elements, yin-yang, and qi (Elahee, Mao & Shen, 2019).

The principle of yin-yang states that all things exist as inseparable and contradictory opposites like female-male, dark-young etc. and both attract and complement each other. 'Yin is negative, dark and feminine. Yang is positive, bright and masculine.' The interaction between the yin and the yang is said to maintain harmony in the universe and which influences everything in it. A correct balance between the two is necessary to maintain good health as well (Wang, 2012).

The law of five elements is used as a method of diagnosis and treatment by assessing the individual's conditions by evaluating their sense organs, taste, and mood. This helps identify in which element there is an imbalance of energy. The five elements include wood, fire, earth, metal and water, and each element is associated with certain organs, colors, taste etc. Each individual is a blend of these elements, and to be healthy, these elements need to be balanced. Health conditions are caused when they become imbalanced - one element will become too active, which are expressed through symptoms, or change in mood, taste, color of skin. Therefore, questions are asked regarding their sensory experiences in order to identify the location of the imbalance and they are treated for the same (Maciocia, 2009).

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In the beginning of Chinese medicine, disease was seen as an entity which was outside of the body. It was only in the Han dynasty that disease was seen as resulting from a disharmony within the body. The main causes of diseases were seen as being due to emotions, climatic conditions, and poor lifestyle. Chen Yen in his book *San-yin Fang* (1174) divides the causes of diseases into three factors – internal causes, external causes and miscellaneous causes. The internal causes are said to directly affect the organs and the elements, and are said to arise from inside the body. The external causes include the climatic conditions like the wind, coldness, dampness, dryness, summer etc. The miscellaneous causes are those that are neither eternal nor internal, they are related to one's lifestyle. This includes one's poor constitution, fatigue, lack or excess of exercise, overwork, diet, poisons, trauma and incorrect treatment. To those who practice the Five Element Constitutional Acupuncture, the internal causes are of greater importance (Hicks, Hicks & Mole, 2010). Illnesses are also seen as being acquired because of a disharmony in the body resulting from a lack of flow of energy (qi), or excess flow which leads to blockage in the meridian channels. Qi is the vital energy that flows through the meridian channels to the various organs. Traditionally, there are 12 meridians and 8 extra meridians on the body surface, and on these meridians, 800 acupuncture points are present which are helpful for diagnosing and treating illnesses (Jalil, 1991).

Mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (World Health Organisation). According to Keyes (2002), there are three components to mental health – emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. Emotional well-being includes satisfaction, happiness and an interest towards life. Psychological well-being includes being satisfied with one's life, being responsible for one's life, having good self-esteem, and maintaining good relationship with others. Social well-being refers to being a part of the society, contributing to society and understanding how society works.

Mental health can also be defined as a *‘dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society’* (Galderisi, Heinz, Kastrup, Beezhold & Sartorius, 2015). *‘Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium’* (Galderisi, Heinz, Kastrup, Beezhold & Sartorius, 2015). This definition is broader as it takes into account the differences in cultures, values and social background.

Acupuncture views the mind and the body to be one entity, so it does not look at the mind as a separate being. Therefore, when it comes to treatment, the practitioners treat the imbalance in the five elements and not the symptoms of the body or mind (Lee, 2002). Not many studies have been conducted on Acupuncture in the treatment of psychological illnesses; however, there are some that report it reduces symptoms of depression (Allen, Schnyer & Hitt, 1998) and anxiety (Snizek & Siddiqui, 2013).

There are different types of Acupuncture treatments – Traditional Chinese Acupuncture, Japanese Acupuncture, Korean Acupuncture, Indian Acupuncture, Auricular Acupuncture, Laser Acupuncture etc. All the different types of acupuncture treatment are traditionally based on TCM focusing on bringing the body to balance by restoring the flow of qi, but each

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have few differences in their techniques. The needles are usually inserted in the specific acupoints for 10 to 30 minutes, and it produces a feeling of dull pain or tingling sensation (Brazier, 2017). This is called the De Qi sensation. Traditional Chinese Acupuncture involves inserting needles that are 1.5 inches long to various acupuncture points in order to stimulate the flow of qi, and may use cupping or moxibustion methods in conjunction with needling. Japanese Acupuncture uses fewer needles and inserts to a shallower depth. Korean Acupuncture uses more needles and they use copper needles than stainless steel ones. Indian Acupuncture is a more recent treatment method, and it involves treating at a single point either using soft touch or single point needling which is inserted only at the surface of the skin. Auricular Acupuncture involves treating using only the acupoints at the ear, stimulating it either with needles or with low electric currents. Laser Acupuncture involves using low energy laser beams to stimulate the acupoints.

There aren't many studies concerning the treatment of psychological disorders using Acupuncture; however, some meta-analytical studies and systematic reviews show that it can be used to treat depression, anxiety and PTSD. A study done by Kawakita & Okada (2014) show that effect of acupuncture can be comparable to that of antidepressants in the case of MDD and post-stroke depression, and that it can be comparable to that of CBT in the case of PTSD. A systematic review by Sniezek & Siddiqui (2013) showed that acupuncture was beneficial for treating depression and anxiety when used in conjunction with counseling and psychotherapy.

METHODOLOGY

Research Question

How do Indian Acupuncturist view or look at psychological health?

Research Design

The research design used in this study is grounded theory. Indian Acupuncture is a relatively new science and there aren't many literatures on the same, so grounded theory would seem to be an apt paradigm of choice in order to get a better conceptual understanding of the topic.

Setting

Due to the pandemic caused by COVID – 19 in the world, telephonic interviews were conducted for all the participants according to their own convenience and free time. They were asked beforehand to choose their preferred date and time for the interview.

Sample

The participants of this study consisted of professionals practicing Indian Acupuncture. They consist of people who have completed the course in Acupuncture, and have been practicing the same henceforth. The years the participants have practiced Indian Acupuncture ranges from 1 – 9 years. They were selected through snowball sampling where contact with one participant in the study helped get in contact with other participants. Sampling was done till theoretical saturation was reached. The present study consists of 11 Acupuncturists, who were from the South Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. There were members of both genders who participated in this study – 7 females and 4 males.

Procedure

Data was collected using semi-structured process of interview, which consisted of asking a series of predetermined questions that are open-ended in nature (Given, 2008). Only those who are currently practicing Indian Acupuncture were included in the study. Google forms

were first sent to the participants which included a brief information about the study and the ethics of the research process. The participants were asked for their consent to participate in the study, and their demographic details were collected as well. They were given the freedom to choose their preferred date and time for the interview as well. The semi-structured interview questions were based on the literature on Acupuncture, and the topics included aspects of causes of psychological problems, and its various conceptual understanding. The interviews were mostly in English, while some spoke in their regional languages of Tamil or Malayalam in between. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with interviews in other regional languages being translated to English before being transcribed. In order to analyse the data, thematic analysis was used where in-vivo coding was used and themes were generated.

RESULTS

Five themes have been obtained from the data collected from the 11 participants. And these include holistic entity, mind morbid, flow of energy, healthy mind, and basis of treatment.

Holistic entity

This refers to the concept of the mind and body being one entity, thereby not differentiating between the two in terms of treatment as well. Four sub-themes identified under this include mind and body, views of modern medicine, concept of disease, and power of the body.

Mind and Body. The mind and body are seen as one entity, which work together for general health. They are considered the same, with the body seen as the visible mind and the mind as an invisible body. If there are any afflictions affecting the body, it'll affect the mind. Similarly, if there are any afflictions affecting the mind, it'll affect the body as well. They are interconnected. As one respondent said, *"If there's any difficulty in the body, it'll affect the mind. Similarly, if there's any difficulty in the mind, it'll affect the body. That is, the mind and body are not separate. One is visible, the other is invisible."* Since both are seen as one entity, the treatment for afflictions of the mind and the body are the same as well. *"When treating, there is nothing called treating body alone, nothing called treating mind alone. You treat for both actually. The acupuncture is a treatment for mind, body and soul."*

Views of Modern Medicine. Unlike the traditional medicine systems like Acupuncture, the Modern medical system differentiates between the mind and body, and therefore gives treatment according to the symptoms presented. Modern medicine has given the term psychosomatic disorders, which is explained in Acupuncture as being due to imbalance in the elements in the human body. And since the body and mind are one entity, any psychological problems can result in problems in the body as well. *"The five elements is what keeps our mind and body in balance. When it has an effect on the body.... That's what is called psychosomatic problems... something that the modern medicine called it as."*

Concept of Disease. Modern medicine has been said to have given the name disease, which according to Acupuncture is the elimination of wastes/morbid. Acupuncture does not treat the symptoms of problems like in Modern medicine, rather it looks at the dysfunctions in the five elements and treats accordingly. Acupuncture attributes the symptoms of various diseases to be the body eliminating the various waste materials that have been accumulated. And so it does not see disease as something to fear, rather it sees it as the body functioning well. Acupuncture promotes listening to the body and following its needs, and not trying to suppress or hindering the elimination process. *"...the much we suppress mental waste or physical waste, that much our body will have to strain to eliminate. Our body will use all its*

forces to push out its elimination." Using medicines is also seen as suppressing the natural instincts of the body to eliminate its morbid.

Sometimes when any pain or fever comes from oral medicines we suppress whatever the elimination process. So higher possibility that morbid will accumulate so by using medicines it will produce chemical morbid. See, normal morbid is not harmful, for that whatever you use medicine, that chemical also will convert into morbid, will accumulate in your body, that will create lot of trouble in the future. So during that extreme condition ...that is called acute morbid. It is the poisonous morbid will be converted into cancer symptoms. So because of morbid only a lot of disease produced.

Power of the Body. Diseases or any afflictions of the mind or body are due to accumulation of morbid, therefore, listening to the body and mind is the best way to eliminate them. The body and the mind takes care of itself, and therefore hindering this process this is not advisable. *"According to classic acupuncture, the body takes care of itself, it creates itself, it treats itself...Our main work is not hinder the body's functioning, and we're helping the body to recover. In short, removal of wastes, toxins and morbid."* Furthermore, menstruation in women is seen as a process where the body tries to naturally restore itself through the elimination of physical and mental morbid.

During the menstruation period, it's the period when more elimination occurs in our body. Both physically and mentally. Both physical and mental morbid should be eliminated during that time. And during that time, when we are not expressing it efficiently, it can cause to accumulating the mind morbid, and it will lead to mental illness.

Mind morbid

Mind morbid refers to the unwanted or waste materials in the mind that can affect one's psychological health. Three sub-themes were identified which include thoughts and emotions, dreams, and reasons.

Thoughts and Emotions. The unexpressed thoughts and feelings are believed to be mind morbid, and which can be disturbing to the person. They are also seen as the morbid of the fire element. Suppressing one's thoughts and feelings can cause morbid to accumulate as well. Acupuncture explains thought and thinking. Thinking is likened to a stream of water which carries many thoughts – good and bad. Selecting a thought from this flow of water and clinging or suppressing it can cause various psychological problems.

How our mind works, it is like a water flow. In water, it is flower will go, dirt will also go. Some dust, wood all will travel. Like that our human mind works like that. Good thoughts and bad thoughts together will travel. Sometimes if you select something, you are responsible for that.

The way to eliminate mind morbid is to watch the thought or the emotion one is feeling, and let it go. By not suppressing it or acting on it, the morbid can get eliminated. Every thought or emotion has an end, so watching it until it reaches the end without criticizing or suppressing the thought can help eliminate it. *"But as long as you cling to that feeling, that negative feeling. The lifelong clinging to that negative feelings is what is mind morbid."* Furthermore, mind morbid affect one's appetite as well. Since the body has to deal with the mind morbid, all it can do to repair or maintain itself is through metabolic activity so it taps into the stored fat cells converting it into energy which may result in less hunger or appetite.

When your body has to deal with negative issues inside itself, the only thing it can do for the time being is metabolic activity. There are already stored fat cells inside itself,

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so for energy needs it can use the alternative. That is again the food that we have that is stored as energy. But we never equate it as an illness to the amount of hunger that we have felt.

Dreams. Dreams can be a type of mind morbid which are the thoughts or desires stored in the mind. If there are thoughts that cannot be fulfilled, then through dreaming these thoughts can be expressed and then they get eliminated. *“Whatever is unwanted for you, be it in your thoughts or in whatever way, it will be a morbid only. These unwanted thoughts will eliminate as dreams in your life.”* Dreaming is normal and the unconscious thoughts are considered to show their expression through dreams. It is not normal when it leaves an individual waking up disturbed or upset, and this may be caused due to an imbalance in the elements. *“If the fear factor is there, then they will get very bad dreams, threatening dreams in the night. That’s it. When you balance that element, it will be normal.”*

Reason. Many reasons were given as to the cause of psychological problems or mind morbid and they have been attributed to the stress of living in the materialistic and competitive world, with an aim to reach a target or goal. *“They are not able to achieve the target, they are mentally, emotionally, they are getting affected.”* It has also been attributed to imbalance in the elements, the gap between expectation and reality, greed, having many desires than necessary, attitudes of people (*“Their attitude towards life and life situations. It depends on how they look at life situation. When people get into stressful situations when it is beyond their control, they lose control over their mind”*), suppressing negative experiences in life, the current lifestyle (*“I think their lifestyle, their present lifestyle of people”*) of eating when it is not needed or a lack of sleep (*“Mostly it will be lack of sleep, or it may start with lack of sleep”*), and due to the lack of venting or expressing oneself.

Flow of Energy

This refers to the flow of energy that exists in the environment and the human body. No sub-themes were identified for this theme.

Both the environment/universe and the human body are made up of the five elements. The environment and the human body can therefore be looked at holistically as well, since it is the same five elements that circulate in humans and in the environment. Therefore, anything that affects humans will affect the environment, and anything that affects the environment will affect the human body as well. *“It is the five elements that is sitting inside my body. So of course the five elements is affected by what is happening outside. So everything that nature goes thru...it’s going to affect everything equally.”* Therefore, depending on the nature of energy in a human, it can affect the vibe of the environment.

If the mind of a person is clean, automatically the land of the person becomes very organic. The organic land is nothing but the organic mind of the farmer. Because of the clean mind, the entire environment become organic. At the same time, if the environment is corrupted, then he also corrupted. The mind also become corrupted.

Similarly, if one is in an environment that instills good feeling, then their problems may disappear. *“I used to have heartburn. Nothing was getting rid of it. But when I reached in a place, like I really loved that place. When I stayed there for three-four days, everything was gone.”* Furthermore, in situations of crisis like the pandemic, there is a lot of fear circulating in the environment and even if one is not initially affected by it, it can essentially impact them later. This is because the human body always tries to adapt to the environmental

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changes, so the energy in oneself feeds on the fear circulating in the environment, thereby impacting individuals.

There is a lot of confused energy that is circulating in the world. A lot of fear... Right now the energy that is feeding on is fear. So even if you are not affected by it, definitely the energy is circulating around you... our body has also got this ability to adjust to its environment. So when everybody is in a condition of fear, although you are not believing in it... since this is the energy that is circulating around, the body loses its capacity for appetite.

Healthy Mind

This refers to the things one can do to maintain one's own psychological health. No sub-themes were identified for this theme.

It is important to have a clean mind since it will help eliminate mind morbid and not lead to an accumulation of the same. And this can be achieved through having a balance in the five elements, leading simple lives and not violating the law of nature. It is also important to associate with good thoughts as well. Sharing or expressing one's thoughts and emotions can be helpful as well. Addressing the problematic issues/thoughts/emotions and not evading it can help rectify the problem as well.

Sometimes we evade an emotion because we are scared of facing it. So anything that we evade is not going to go away. But yes, we can allow it to come and we can be a witness to it, we don't have to act upon it.

At first, many thoughts may run through one's mind, but every thought or emotion is considered to have some end, so keeping a watch on the thought or emotion without reacting to it can help in maintaining a healthy mind.

Every thought has an end. What the problem is when the thought is coming, we immediately interpret it and suppress it. And that's why it comes as bigger and bigger thoughts and becomes a problem. So we have to watch that thought. That thought has an end, and at that end the thought will get eliminated.

Understanding that pain is a part of recovery and that it too has an end can help keep a healthy mind as well. Also not being attached to the materialistic world can reduce the stress and anxiety that it brings.

Basis of Treatment

Basis of treatment refers to how the treatment takes place, and it has three sub-themes which includes treatment, golden rules and importance of sleep.

Treatment. Treatment in Acupuncture mainly deals with rectifying the energy flow in the body through a single stimulation, which aims to balance the five elements of the body, and therefore the mind. It is based on the five element philosophy, observation and the pulse diagnosis method. And is not based on what the patient says their symptoms or problems are. The treatment is holistic, since the mind and body are considered as a single entity, such that treating the body will treat the mind, and treating the mind will treat the body. Patients do come in for treating their psychological problems but mainly after they get the confidence that their problem will be kept a secret. *"People do come, but only after they get the confidence that things will be kept secret."* And sometimes patients come to vent out their feelings and thoughts, which gives them relief. *"They come for opening their hearts to someone. Just sharing their feelings seem to give them half of the relief. There's a lot of people who come to just share."*

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Golden Rules. It is said that people themselves can make sure they are healthy physically and mentally, by following the law of nature. And even if they do undergo any afflictions of the mind or body, it becomes easier to bring the body and mind back to balance than when they didn't follow the law of nature. *"If we follow the golden rules, it should be fast. It should be fast means... first of all, the body has to come to that rhythm and then treatment will be fast."* Violating the law of nature can lead to imbalance in the elements and an accumulation of morbid which thereby affect the proper functioning of the mind and body. The law of nature asserts that people should listen to their body and follow the four golden rules which concerns hunger, thirst, rest and sleep.

Following the natural law... There's something called the four G. Four golden rules. Food, hunger, thirst, rest and sleep. These four comprise the four golden rules. So these four things if we follow it in the correct way then the body will be healthy. So with that, mind can also be healthy.

It says that one must eat only when hungry, to eat slowly, to sit down and eat, to concentrate on the food when eating, to drink only when thirsty, to drink slowly, to rest when fatigued and to not over-exert oneself, and to sleep early. It also asserts that dinner should be finished early at least two hours before bed time, and it should consist of light food or fruits. Furthermore, rest is said to be applicable for the mind as well, since one may want to be alone in times of distress. In such a case as well, one should listen to the body and do so. *"And the rest could be for the mind also. When you're in a totally confused state, you would definitely want to be cut off from the outer world. That is again your body asking you to shut down for sometime."*

Importance of Sleep. Sleep is an important aspect in maintaining psychological health. A major part of morbid elimination and detoxification is done during sleep. Although it seems as if the body does not function during sleep, repair work and maintenance are occurring during that time. *"...during sleep also our body is of course not at sleep. Our body is still working. So a good sleep with your mind calm will obviously help you. I mean, repair and maintenance kind of things mainly happen during sleep."* Therefore, it is important to have good sleeping patterns for the body's proper functioning. Acupuncture asserts that one sleep by 9 pm and wake up by 3 or 4 am. It is said that during 9 pm to 11 pm, the triple warmer gets rectified. The triple warmer is a concept which involves maintaining the temperature of the body. During 11 pm to 1 pm, the gall bladder undergoes detoxification, and the liver undergoes the same during 1 pm to 3 pm. Therefore, for proper functioning of these organs and the elements, it is important to sleep early.

11 to 1 is gallbladder, 1 to 3 is liver. 9 to 11 is triple warmer... So 9 to 11 is the illusionary function of Chinese acupuncture... it's a concept, I mean the organ is not visible which controls the heat of thoracic, pelvic and abdomen cavity. It needs different temperature. So if you sit calmly, this 9 to 11, the triple warmer will take care. And it'll settle the heat at the correct level. Then 11 to 1 gall bladder takes it, 1 to 3 liver takes place. Then you get good sleep, and detoxification and next morning you will wake up fresh.

Also, it's important that the mind and body come to a balance or equilibrium state before one goes to sleep, and this can be achieved by switching off all electronic items and sitting calmly. *"We suggest our patients is that before going to sleep you go to a normal state, like switch off your phones and TV and sit calmly."* This is because sleeping also requires energy, and if the mind is disturbed then all the energy gets channelized there and one wouldn't be able to sleep properly.

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Normally when a body is going to sleep, we see that it is not doing anything at all. But actually it's again a job to be done. For the body to do its job, again it needs energy. But that energy is already used by the person who is thinking about everything that is keeping him awake.

Moreover, morbid elimination takes place during sleep and this is the most easy and natural way of elimination. Otherwise, if one does not sleep well, the body will find an alternate way to eliminate the morbid, which can be painful. This may include mood swings, vomiting, diarrhea, low energy or motivation, other mental illnesses etc. *"Body will find an alternative route to throw out this waste. So, this alternative route will always be painful. And the correct straight route will not be painful, it will be very smooth."* Furthermore, the 9 pm to 3 am time slot is considered to be a negativity period where nature is in opposition to humans, so it is considered that any activity of man will not go right during that time.

Between evening 9 and 3 is a negativity period. Nature is oppose humans that means its negativity. So events should not survive during that time. If surviving at that time, then it will automatically lead to problem in their mind, as well as in their body...Automatically negative thoughts will come and it will affect your mind as well as your body. So sleep plays an important role.

DISCUSSION

In this qualitative study, 11 participants were interviewed to understand the perspective on psychological health from an Acupuncturists viewpoint. The major themes identified include holistic entity, mind morbid, flow of energy, healthy mind and basis of treatment.

Holistic entity refers to viewing the mind and body as one entity and thereby giving treatment based on the dysfunctions in the element, and not on the symptoms presented by the patients. Both mind and body are interconnected so problems in one lead to problems in the other as well. 'Chinese medicine, including acupuncture, looks at the mind and body as one entity which needs to be treated together. Therefore, psychological problems are treated along with the existing somatic problems. Therefore, acupuncture uses a holistic approach to explain psychological problems' (Lee, 2002). A disease is seen as an accumulation of morbid, and they can be naturally eliminated from the body if one does not hinder the body's functioning. Mind morbid are the unwanted or waste materials in the mind that can affect one's psychological health. And they comprise of the thoughts and emotions that one may suppress or hold onto. There are various reasons for mind morbid to get accumulated, some of which include stress, desires and greed, attitudes towards life, gap between expectation and reality etc. Moreover, living in this materialistic world creates a lot of stress and anxiety as individuals struggle to achieve their goal while foregoing their own health in terms of taking rest and eating properly. This can lead to the hindering of the morbid elimination process thereby leading to the accumulation of the same. 'Psychological problems occur because of a combination of emotional stress and other factors like an improper diet, constitution, overwork etc. But the main contributing factor is emotional stress which causes a disharmony in the organs thereby altering the circulation of qi.' (Maciocia, 2009)

There is a flow of energy in the environment and the human body, and disturbance in either can affect the other. If one maintains a good psychological health, it can be seen in one's environment. Similarly, being in an environment that has negative energy can influence a person's mood. 'The universe is said to be formed from five elements like the body. There has been a mix in medicine and spiritualism in the olden days because of this, since those who tried to understand the Universe first tried to understand the body.' (Farook, 2017)

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A healthy mind refers to what one can do to maintain one's psychological health. Expressing oneself and facing one's problems can help rectify the psychological issue since evading it will not make the situation or problem go away. There may be many negative thoughts or intense emotions one may go through, but understanding that every thought and emotion has an end, and understanding that pain is recovery is important in maintaining good psychological health because if one allows the thought or emotion to pass, it will go. Moreover, one's mind has been likened to a pendulum where one's emotions may swing to either side, but eventually it comes back to normal. 'An excessiveness or inhibition of emotion is considered pathological, and a moderation of emotional expression is preferred. Therefore, it contends with the Western view which promotes that catharsis of emotion' (Lee, 2002).

The basis of treatment refers to how the treatment of psychological problems takes place. Since the mind and the body are considered the same, there is no difference in treatment of either. The dysfunctions in elements is considered when deciding which acupuncture point to stimulate. Following the golden rules, and especially having a proper sleep, is said to be important in maintaining good psychological health. Moreover, bringing the body and mind to balance is important for making the treatment for any psychological disturbances easier. 'In the olden days, people were more resilient from diseases because they ate a balanced diet, slept or took rest at regular times, did not over burden or stress their mind and body, or over-indulged themselves in any way' (Ni, 1995).

CONCLUSION

Five major themes were identified in this qualitative study which includes holistic entity, mind morbid, flow of energy, healthy mind and basis of treatment. Unlike Modern medicine, Acupuncture views the mind and body to be the same thereby asserting that the treatment is holistic in nature. And unlike the former, disease is seen only as a way of eliminating the morbid or toxins and so it doesn't bring any fear about the concept. Following the four golden rules and maintaining a balance in the five elements is essential for the proper functioning of the body and mind as well. Mind morbid are the unwanted or unexpressed thoughts and emotions that may occur in a person for a variety of reasons. One can maintain a healthy mind by following the four golden rules and leading simple lives, and also by understanding the concept of keeping a watch on thoughts and emotions and not holding onto them. Furthermore, it has also been understood that the environment can influence one's psychological state, and the reverse stands true as well.

Understanding the human body and mind, and following the thinking or rules of acupuncture has implications on using the same in combination with psychotherapy for maintaining one's psychological health. Moreover, this study looked at the broad aspects of psychological health, so further studies can be conducted to understand specific components of the same. Furthermore, more research can be conducted surrounding the theme flow of energy in order to understand the concept better.

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Conflict of Interest

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions

1. What could be the reason for people to have psychological problems?
2. More and more people seem to be suffering from psychological problems these days, be it stress or anxiety. Why do you think there is an increase in psychological problems in today's world?

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3. How do you treat such illnesses?
4. I've heard that treating other physical illnesses/ailments indirectly lead to treating the psychological problems, what do you think about that?
5. According to the morbid elimination theory, when morbid gets accumulated in the body with no way of eliminating it, it can cause various illnesses. What does suppressing one's thoughts lead to?
6. What are mind morbid? What are the symptoms or how do they manifest themselves?
7. What causes these mind morbid to occur? What can be done to eliminate them?
8. Having a moderate amount of emotions seems to be preferred. What causes such imbalances in emotion? And what can one do to maintain their emotional levels?
9. Can environmental factors cause psychological problems because of a negative energy flow? Since the universe is said to be formed from five elements just like the body, is there any connection to how the imbalance in the universe causes imbalance in a human's system? Or if an imbalance in humans body leads to imbalance in the universe.
10. According to one theory in psychology, dreams can help us find the root causes of suffering or of psychological problems, since our unconscious mind shows itself thru dreams. What does acupuncture say about dreams? Is it normal to dream?
11. Sleep is seen as an indicator of psychological problems, since sleep is influenced by what one is going thru in their lives. If one is calm, they can sleep well, but if the mind is restless, they sleep badly. What do you think about this?