

Life Skills to deal with Mental Health Issues in Women

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ABSTRACT

Mental health plays a vital role in leading healthy and happy life in individuals. It refers to an overall psychological well-being, or an absence of a mental disorder. From the perspective of “positive psychology”, mental health may include an individual’s ability to enjoy life and create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Women experience various mental health issues due to digitalization, interpersonal relationship issues and failure in daily activities such as difficulty in problem solving and decision making. In this paper, the author has attempted to shed light on the various mental health issues found in women in current scenario. Life skills training can be effective to tackle these issues. Life skills refer to the abilities that help to promote mental health and well-being. It includes abilities like decision making, problem solving and interpersonal relationship skills etc. These are found to be effective in dealing with the difficult situations which may lead to mental illness. Life skills training particularly to deal with these issues would help women to promote mental health and balance in their life. Moreover author has also attempted to establish that life skills intervention program cultivate the necessary skills that help in maintenance of mental health in women. Development of these abilities would help women to adjust with the changes in environment occurring due to digitalization, establish positive relationships and show efficiency in problem solving and decision making.

Keywords: *Mental health, Life skills, Women, and Digitalization*

Mental health refers to the overall psychological well-being. It includes the way an individual feels about oneself, the quality of relationships and the ability to manage feelings and deal with difficulties. Good mental health does not mean just the absence of mental illness. Being mentally healthy is much more than being free of anxiety, depression and other psychological problems. Mental health refers to the presence of positive characteristics rather than the absence of mental illness. Similarly, not feeling bad is not same as feeling good. While some people may not have negative feelings at some point of time but they need to do things to make them feel positive in order to get normal mental and emotional health.

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Mental health describes a level of psychological well-being, or an absence of mental disorder. From the perspective of “positive psychology”, it may include an individual’s ability to enjoy life, and create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. It can also be defined as an expression of emotions, and as signifying a successful adaptation to a range of demands. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2001) defines mental health as “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”. The definition of mental health is often affected by cultural differences, subjective assessments, surrounded environment and competing professional theories. Moreover, mental health refers to a person’s health of the mind. Therefore various kinds of factors such as social, emotional, cultural and education can affect mental health of an individual.

Mental health is also as important as physical health for an individual. Mental health affects almost all the areas of functioning of an individual. Good mental health helps individuals to lead a happy life where they can have proper adjustment with the surrounded environment and with individuals around them. They can be efficient and effective in problem solving and decision making and can cope up with the normal stresses of life. Altogether these functions help them to maintain their mental health.

Mental Disorder

Mental disorder, also called a mental illness or psychiatric disorder, is a behavioral or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning (Bolton & Derek, 2008). Features of mental illness may be persistent throughout the course of the illness, it can be relapsing and remitting, or occur as a single episode. Mental disorders are usually defined by a combination of how a person behaves, feels, perceives, or thinks (WHO, 2014). There are different kinds of mental disorders with varying signs and symptom. Any individual can develop mental disorder at any age and at any point of time. Many times these signs and symptoms are precipitated, perpetuated and predisposed also.

The causes or etiology of mental disorders are often not clear. There can be involvement of various factors like, genetic, psychological, emotional, social or cultural. There can be only one factor or the combination of various factors responsible for the occurrence of the mental disorder. Once the mental disorder has been developed in the individual there are different approaches available to deal with it such as, pharmacological treatment and non-pharmacological intervention techniques. Both the broad approaches have been found effective and these methods are widely used to tackle the issues related to mental health and specifically mental disorders.

Mental Health Issues in Women

Prevalence and sex difference in mental disorders reveal that there are few disorders which are more common in women than men. Men and women experience different kind of mental health problems. Women exhibit more internalizing disorders such as, depression and anxiety

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disorder etc and men externalizing disorders such as, Substance abuse and antisocial personality disorder etc (Rosenfeild and Mouzon, 2013). It has been seen that the difference in gender is found at every age in the context of occurrence of mental disorders. Gender differences are found not only in occurrence but in maintenance and relapse also men and women differ.

During adolescence, females are more prone to develop depression and eating disorders, and they are more engaged in suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts than males. In adulthood, the prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders is higher in women than men. There are no consistent sex-differences in prevalence in case of severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. It has been found that women are more likely to exhibit serious forms of bipolar depression. In older age group it has been observed that there are more women living with the condition of Alzheimer's disease than men. All these age group wise differences in gender show that men and women differ at each level.

Gender difference plays important role in the maintenance of mental illness also. In current scenario, women have been found to experience mental health problems due to various reasons present in the environment. Nowadays individuals are more dependent on the digital work and it is affecting their daily activities also. As it can be said that adolescent age group is more comfortable and they find it easy to work through digitalization in comparison to women. Incompetency in digital work contributes to the developmental and maintenance of mental illness in women. This incompetency in digitalization can be attributed to various reasons such as illiteracy, lack of exposure and opportunity to learn and so on. Lack of exposure causes various difficulties in women and due to that they develop distress, anxiety, depression and other mental health problems. In Indian context, women are observed to be at back. They are supposed to work at home and rarely given a chance to get adjusted in the current technology of the world.

Now-a-days a lot of number of daily activities are controlled by internet or electronic and women seem to have more difficulty in dealing with the difficulties occurred by the digital world. Women experiences stress or undergo mental health issues occurred due to the failure in performing daily activities such as problem solving, decision making, managing time and conflicts at workplace and so on. It has been observed that when women are unable to succeed in daily activities they go through some kind of mental health issues such as, stress, depression or anxiety etc. Difficulty to solve any problem related to work or related to the interpersonal issues lead to the mental stress which affects the overall adjustment of the individual. If women are faced with the critical situation to deal then sometimes it is difficult for them to deal effectively which causes stress and expresses inability of critical thinking. Women may seem to face difficulties in the situations which demand creative thinking and due to that they have mental and emotional issues.

It is observed that maximum population chooses the mode of social media to communicate or express feelings for others. Digitalization is increasing more and taking place in individual's

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daily life since past few years. So the current generation is more adaptive and comfortable with the work. Women belonging to late adulthood have less experience or exposure to the digital world and this is the reason they experience difficulty to cope up with the pace of increasing digital world.

Life Skills

Life skills refer to the abilities that help individuals to promote mental health and competence as they face the realities of life. WHO has defined life skills as, "**the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life**". Many abilities like decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, coping with stress are the different life skills which are possessed by the individuals.

WHO has laid down ten core life skills and those are as follows: Self-awareness, Empathy, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Decision making, Problem solving, Effective communication, Interpersonal relationship, Coping with stress and coping with emotion. These are the skills which play an important role in the individual's life.

Life Skills Training

Life skills training are an important tool which has been found to be very effective in helping the individuals to adjust in difficult situations and cope up with the stress. Various studies have been reported which support that the life skills training, focused on self-awareness, coping skills and problem solving, have been useful for students and adolescents. Later on it was observed that after the training they were more effective in problem solving and their communication skills and self-confidence also improved (Martin and Jones, 2009; Turner et al., 2008; Kibret, 2016). Their quality of life also found to be improved (Bob and Roisin, 2010; Bo et al., 2010).

Life skills training may be beneficial for women to deal with the difficulties which occur due to digitalization and these difficulties further lead to mental illness. Life skills training would prevent women from mental illness and improve their quality of life. Due to interpersonal issues women experiences lot of mental health issues, this turns to interfere overall functioning. Here, life skills training would play an important role and can be beneficial in developing abilities to deal with the situations. Especially interpersonal skills and personal skills would be more effective to deal with these issues. Interpersonal skills include communication skills such as assertiveness, negotiation and conflict management skills whereas personal skills include cognitive skills such as critical thinking, decision making, problem solving; socio-emotional skills and personal resources management skills. If women lacks in assertiveness and due to which they feel difficulty in interpersonal relationship and experiences stress then developing interpersonal skills would help to the larger extent.

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Women, especially in Indian context, have lots of responsibilities and while performing those responsibilities they tend to commit mistakes due to lack of enough problem solving and decision making abilities. The small failures in their daily life affect the other cognitive processes such as complex thinking process. With the consistent failures, women may experience mental disorders like generalized anxiety disorder and depression etc. Women are more prone to develop depressive disorders also. If women are provided adequate life skills training including problem solving and decision making abilities then they would be more competent in dealing with difficulties related to these skills. However, they can improve the quality of life.

In current scenario, women go under the pressure of performing with the pace of changing world. Women with children have the burden of managing children's needs also. Children tend to match with increasing facilities such as digitalization. In respect of achieving or developing skills they need help from then family members also especially from mother. It is easy for the children to learn and develop skills with the changing world but it can be difficult for their mothers to adopt the changes such as technical changes and increasing social demands. At that point of time when women are not able to adjust with the children in the society they experience difficulty in maintaining cordial relationship with the child. They often get involved in arguments with children and this harms women's mental health. In this context if women are provided the life skills training for creative thinking, empathy, interpersonal relationship, coping with stress and emotion then they would be able to deal with the issues and it would help them to make adjustment in the changing world.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this paper it can be said that the changing or new world requires individuals to be effective and efficient in digitalization. Women are vulnerable to get affected by digitalization and develop mental health issues. In India women are less provided with opportunities to learn and come up with the problems especially in rural areas. All these lead women to develop mental health problems. They do not have access to develop required skills. To tackle with overall mental health issues occurring due to digitalization women can be provided life skills training. These life skills training would help women to deal with problems effectively and improve their decision making abilities. Other than these benefits life skills training may enhance their mental health, well-being and quality of life.

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