International Journal of
Social Impact

Research Paper

The Effects of Interpersonal Relationships on Mental Health

Makondelele Radzilani[1]*

ABSTRACT

There are several kinds of relationships that human nature encounters. Some are temporary, and others are long-lasting. Others are strong, while others are weak and easily distracted. All of them affect our mental health in one way or the other. Thus, in relationships, mental health can be maintained or distracted. This review aimed to explore the effect of interpersonal relationships on mental health. Information was obtained through an analysis of scholarly articles on this topic. Findings indicate that individuals in interpersonal relationships either have strong mental health or if the relationship is not maintained, they suffer mental symptoms. Healthy relationships promote mental health, while toxic relationships compromise mental health.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Relationships, Mental Health*

An interpersonal relationship is an association between two or more individuals that may range from temporary to permanent (Velmurugan, 2016). This relationship may be based on inference, love, solidarity, or any social commitment. Hui (2015) pointed out that the perspective of interpersonal relationships can differ from family relations, marriage, friendship, relations with associations, neighborhoods, and places of work. According to Vermurugan (2016), this relationship may also be regulated by law, custom, or agreement and is the basis of social groups and society. The American Psychological Association (2020) defines interpersonal relations as all interactions, connections, and patterns observed between two or more people. These definitions prove that individuals from different contexts will define interpersonal relationships depending on the angle they are in. However, it points out that there is a relationship between interpersonal relationships and mental health (Braithwaite & Holt-Lunstad, 2016). Below is the reviewed literature on interpersonal relationships and their effect on mental health, followed by the methodology used to select the articles and the conclusion.

Interpersonal Relationship

The literature highlighted that an interpersonal relationship is a mutual link between two or more persons (Bodika & Aigbavboa, 2018) based on the emotion of love or liking one other (Vermurugan, 2016). This is because interpersonal relationship at any level is sustained by emotion, particularly at the higher levels (Bodika & Aigbavboa, (2018). Obakpolo (2015) found that anything that would bring two individuals together to make them remain in a relationship includes their desire and the aspiration to achieve a goal. Thus, when the

[1]Department of Psychology, University of Venda
*Corresponding Author

interpersonal relationship is established, it must be maintained and cultivated for its growth, but if ignored, the relationship would deteriorate and die (Vermurugan, 2016). For the sustainability of interpersonal relationships, there is a need for those committed to it to maintain it. Interpersonal relationships within a particular context will also enhance the interpersonal skills of the people involved. As a result, it will impact all individuals involved in it.

Interpersonal relationships and mental health
Literature has recognised that there are different advantages of interpersonal relationships and a positive relationship with mental health. There are also detrimental issues related to mental health that cannot go unnoticed. By its definition, Peterson (2019) defines mental health as someone's emotional well-being and a subjective feeling of contentment and life satisfaction despite life's problems, challenges, and upheavals. On the other hand, mental health is viewed as a state of working, studying, and living effectively in the face of pressure (Shannons et al., 2019; Depressive WHO, 2017).

Sias (2013) states that relationships are essential for existing systems and are the centre of different organisations. It is through interpersonal relationships that organisations can be either stable or unstable. This is because workplace relationships are valuable and comprise interpersonal relationships in which employees are involved in executing their jobs. Such relationships consist of supervisor-subordinate relationships, peer-worker relationships, workplace friendships, romantic relationships, and customer relationships (Sias, 2013). Further, Sias stressed that interpersonal relationships foster cordiality among employees, enrich communication, and reduce interpersonal clashes. In the work environment, interpersonal relationships can increase job satisfaction, job commitment, engagement and perceived organisational support. However, for this study, other kinds of interpersonal relationships are entertained.

Kinds of interpersonal relationships and their effects on mental health
For this study, the considered relationships are friendship, family, and romantic relationships. That is because humans find themselves in different relationships depending on the relevant context. Literature proves that interpersonal relationships are connected directly with mental health. Thus, establishing friendly interpersonal relationships is a criterion for mental health (Chu et al., 2017; Liao et al., 2017). The dilemma in interpersonal relationships will affect mental health (Guo et al., 2017). Specifically, the decreased interpersonal trust will lead to a lack of security and affect mental health (Chen, 2010).

Friendship
This is regarded as the chosen association, communality, responsiveness, and sensitivity toward one's needs (Selfless). It is also considered a selfless relationship in which one has to give without expecting anything in return (Van Deventer & Mojapelo-Batka, 2013). This relationship can exist in different contexts, including childhood, school, workplace, communities, neighbours, and families. For this study, friendship is limited to adolescent relationships (Cleary et al., 2015). Cheong et al. (2023) associate this friendship with adolescent peer relationships. A study with Chinese adolescents (Li et al., 2020) and with Australian adolescents (Magson et al., 2020) found that youth with positive peer relationships had a decreased risk of mental health problems. That is because friends are protective against depressive symptoms in adolescents who feel socially excluded (Bukowski et al., 2010). Literature associates peers' positive experiences with a positive evaluation of the self, greater well-being, and fewer internalised problems (Guroglu, 2021;

Oberle et al., 2010). Chollet and Melchior (2014) in Adkins (2021) showed that people with no friends were approximately twice as likely to experience anxiety and depression as compared to those who have at least one childhood friend. Building friendships and maintaining them can help grow healthy mindsets and improve mental health (Ng-Knight et al., 2019).

There is a well-described association between social networks and mental health. Those with few social contacts are known to be at a greater risk for mental health problems (Backer & Ghosh, 2022).

Sullivan (2014) argues that interpersonal relationship is the main manifestation of people's sociality and bad interpersonal relationship will affect mental health. Positive social relationships and support networks tend to arise associated with higher satisfaction with life, self-esteem, happiness, and well-being (Lee & Goldstein, 2016; Rook, 2015).

Family
This relationship involves mother, father, children, and extended family and comprises long-term connection. For this study, only literature regarding parents-adolescent relationships was reviewed. In their study, Keliat, Triana, and Sulistiowati (2019) found family relationships among the protective factors like family support to prevent adolescent mental disorders. Parenting styles play an important role in adolescent adjustment, and studies have shown associations between parenting styles and adolescents' mental health difficulties (Eun et al., 2018; Fong et al., 2022). Authoritarian parenting, which consists of high parental control and low warmth, has been linked to more depressive symptoms (Liu et al., 2022), whereas authoritative parenting was associated with fewer mental health difficulties (Ye et al, 2022). Thus, adolescents who have controlling parents have compromised relationships with their parents and also stand a risk of mental health difficulties. Family environment has been associated with adolescent mental health outcomes (Rodriguez et al, 2014) of which poorer family functioning is related to emotional problems such as anxiety and depression (Auerbach & Ho, 2012).

Romantic relationship
Other than developmental challenges, adolescence is associated with psychosocial challenges, including the processing of intense emotions and the first experience of love (Arnett, 2014). Romantic relationship concerns are a major reason for adolescents to seek counselling services (Price et al., 2016). That is because romantic relationships have been found to impact on psychosocial development and mental health during adolescence (Price, 2016). The evidence proves that adolescent romance have been associated with the risk of suicide attempts or achievements in adolescents, particularly where there are incongruent partnership role-identities, negative sexual experiences and stressful events, like breakups (George, 2012; Soller, 2014).

METHODOLOGY
The current study was exploratory to ensure that the purpose of the study was met. Desktop study was used to access the available literature on the study topic and to achieve the purpose. Research conducted by other researchers on interpersonal relationships and mental health were considered and presented in this paper. Google Scholar and PubMed data bases were used to access research from 2010 to 2024 that were found relevant to the current study. This technique provided an appropriate investigation and analysis for the study. The general literature on interpersonal relations and its effect on mental health was considered.

Such literature was supported by the kinds of interpersonal relationships, their advantages in day-to-day life, and their effects on mental health.

CONCLUSION

It is evident in the reviewed literature that a lack of satisfaction and fulfillment in interpersonal relationships impacts negatively on mental health. Whereas the nurtured interpersonal relationships improve mental health. It costs individuals in interpersonal relationships to maintain their relationships to reduce stress and depressive symptoms. Thus, mental health can be improved by improving relationships in different spaces and contexts. Irrespective of the kind, happy relationships improve mental health.

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Conflict of Interest
The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Radzilani, M. (2024). The Effects of Interpersonal Relationships on Mental Health. *International Journal of Social Impact*, *9*(2), 87-92. DIP: 18.02.011/20240902, DOI: 10.25215/2455/0902011