

MENTAL HEALTH
AND
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT:
A
PSYCHOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE

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Sustainable development

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given

- The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

How Psychology can contribute to Sustainable Development

One way in which psychology is relevant, is its application to repair some of the fall-out of unsustainable development e.g, disaster relief and psychological resilience building in the wake of natural disasters brought about by man-made climate change, or conflict reduction through nonviolent communication, trauma interventions and peace building in the wake of conflicts between ethnic groups .

Health is at the center of sustainable development and a society is unsustainable if its economic and social systems and institutions are compromising mental as well as physical health. A decrease in well-being, such as rising rates of stress related disorders, depression and suicide, dementias, chronic insomnia, attention deficit and short term memory problems, all point to unhealthy and in the long term, unsustainable aspects of the environment, especially for youth.

Using psychology as an indicator reveals aspects of developed societies that are unsustainable in the long run, and suggests what pathways developing countries need to avoid when attempting to build societies based on human health and well-being.

Psychology can contribute to achieve the third goal of Sustainable development i.e. Good Health and Well Being (ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages) .Through the lens of psychology, the pitfalls and unsustainable aspects of materialistic, consumer driven, developed economies can be brought to light through problems in mental health and well-being. Thus psychology can be relevant to sustainable development by helping to foster mental health and well-being in both developed and developing countries.

Well Being

- Well-being, wellbeing , welfare or wellness is a general term for the condition of an individual or group, for example their social, economic, psychological, spiritual or medical state; a high level of well-being means in some sense the individual or group's condition is positive, while low well-being is associated with negative state of mind.

- The concept of well-being was first discussed by the Bhutan Gross National Happiness initiative which referred to subjective well-being as central to sustainable development (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2014). It pointed to the social and economic pillars of sustainable development, the social and economic environment we grow up in, which influences our well-being

MENTAL WELLBEING

- “Feeling happy is a part of mental wellbeing.
- Feelings of contentment ,enjoyment,confidence and engagement with the world are all a part of mental well being.self esteem and self confidence too.

- " Good mental wellbeing does not mean that you never experience feelings or situations that you find difficult," says Professor Stewart Brown. "But it does mean that you feel you have the resilience to cope when times are tougher than usual."
- "No-one can give wellbeing to you. It's you who has to take action," says Professor Stewart-Brown

Five steps to Mental wellbeing

- Connect
- Be active
- Keep learning
- Give to others
- Be mindful

Factors for promoting psychological wellbeing and ultimately effecting sustainable development

- Hardiness
- Self Efficacy
- Resilience
- Self actualization

Subjective Well Being (SWB)

Subjective well-being is “...based on the idea that how each person thinks and feels about his or her life is important”. This idea is developed specifically in a person’s culture. People base their own well-being in relation to their environment and the lives of others around them. Well-being is also subject to how one feels other people in their environment perceive them, whether that positively or negatively.

Happiness Research

- Diener, also known as Dr. Happiness, is one of the lead researchers in the field of subjective well-being. Subjective well-being (SWB), as Diener et al. define it, is how people evaluate their lives – both at the moment and for longer periods such as for the past year. These evaluations include people's emotional reactions to events, their moods, and judgments they form about their life satisfaction, fulfilment, and satisfaction with domains such as marriage and work.[7]

- In 2002, Diener conducted a study at the University of Illinois with Martin Seligman, finding that "the most salient characteristics shared by the 10% of students with the highest levels of happiness and the fewest signs of depression were their strong ties to friends and family and commitment to spending time with them." [4] Diener has said "It is important to work on social skills, close interpersonal ties and social support in order to be happy."

Objective benefits of SWB

Diener proposes that happiness has benefits beyond "feeling good". In a paper published in 2011, Diener and Chan reviewed eight types of evidences that support a causal relationship from SWB to health and longevity. After examining results from longitudinal studies, meta-analysis, animal experiments, human experiments and natural quasi-experiments, Diener and Chan concluded that the evidences overwhelmingly support the argument that high SWB causes better health and longevity (Diener & Chan, 2011).[11]

- Diener also summarized the pathways, through which happiness affects health and longevity. Among which are SWB's influence on physiological processes underlying health and disease, on practice of good health behaviors, and on fulfilling social relationships. Meanwhile, Diener and his colleagues showed that higher SWB leads to higher income, better job performance, more creativity and productivity. They also illustrated that happiness brings about greater self-control, more pro-social behaviors and higher-quality social relationships (DeNeve, Diener, Tay, & Xuereb, 2013).[12] In short, happiness is functional.

Income and SWB

Using longitudinal data from over 100 countries, Diener and his colleagues showed that rich countries are in general happier than poor countries (Diener, Tay, & Oishi, 2013).[17] Also, life satisfaction for most countries goes up as they become wealthier over time. Diener identified three factors that influence the relationship between income and SWB.

- Namely, rising income most likely results in higher SWB when it leads to greater optimism, financial satisfaction and household material prosperity among citizens. Furthermore, Diener and his colleagues investigated the relationship between income and different elements of SWB. They illustrated that income has stronger influence on people's evaluation of their lives than the positive or negative emotions they experience over time (Diener, Kahneman, Tov, & Arora, 2010).[18] The study points to the necessity to evaluate different elements of SWB separately instead of treating happiness as a single entity.

Optimum level of SWB

Despite the advantages of happiness for functioning, one line of Diener's research concerns with the question "can people be too happy". Using large survey data and longitudinal data, Diener and his colleagues showed that too much happiness could be detrimental to one's income, education and political participation(Oishi, Diener,& Lucas, 2007).[13] The most successful people in terms of these three variables are those who experience moderate to high levels of happiness, but not extremely high happiness. However, the very happiest people are most successful in terms of close relationships and volunteer work.

Limits to adaptation of well-being and set point change

The traditional adaptation theory of Well-Being suggests that people have a pre-determined set point for happiness (Brickman & Campbell, 1971). Any life event, positive or negative, can only have transitory influences on SWB. Diener's research challenged the theory by showing that people do not adapt completely to all events. Some powerful events or circumstances can change people's emotional set points (Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006). In particular, people who lose their spouses or jobs cannot fully recover many years after the events (Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2004).

The discovery has profound implications:

First, it explains the enormous differences of SWB between nations across the globe (Diener, Tay, & Oishi, 2013).

Second, it sheds light on the possibility for interventions, both at the individual-level and the societal level, to produce lasting boosts in happiness. Diener and his colleagues also discovered individual differences in adaptation. For instance, some people adapt quickly to the joy of marriage, while others experience a long-lasting effect on their SWB.

THANK YOU