

The Role of Social Support in Improving Individual Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Background: Mental health is a fundamental element underlying an individual's quality of life and well-being. In this modern era, where pressures from various aspects of life - social, economic, and environmental - are increasing, mental health problems have become an increasingly pressing issue. Mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, not only affect individuals but also have a broad impact on society as a whole. The aim of the research is to explore the role of social support in improving individuals' mental health.

Methods: The literature search was conducted through Google Scholar and ResearchGate sources with a range of years between 2018-2024. The keywords used in the literature search were social support and mental health.

Results : Social support significantly enhances mental health through emotional and practical assistance. Emotional support fosters security and reduces anxiety, while practical help aids in daily stress management. Community involvement and social engagement further strengthen mental well-being. Tailored, culturally sensitive, and balanced digital approaches can maximize its positive impact.

Conclusion: Social support is a key factor in improving individuals' mental health. Emotional and practical support, social engagement, as well as technology utilization can contribute significantly to psychological well-being.

Keywords: Social Support; Mental Health

Introduction

Mental health is a fundamental element underlying an individual's quality of life and well-being. In this modern era, where pressures from various aspects of life - social, economic, and environmental - are increasing, mental health problems have become an increasingly pressing issue. Mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety and stress, not only affect individuals but also have a wide-ranging impact on society as a whole. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that can support mental health, one of which is social support.¹

Social support refers to the various forms of assistance that individuals get from their social environment, which includes emotional support, information, and practical support. Research shows that social support has a very significant role in improving mental health. Individuals who have strong social networks tend to cope better with stress and life challenges than those who feel isolated. In this case, support from family, friends and community can serve as a protective barrier that helps individuals deal with various psychological stresses.²

Many studies have proven that social support can contribute to the reduction of symptoms of mental disorders. For example, emotional support from loved ones can provide a sense of security and acceptance, while practical support can assist individuals in dealing with difficult, potentially stressful situations. Conversely, a lack of social support is often associated with an increased risk of mental disorders and poor health. Social isolation can worsen an individual's mental state, creating a vicious cycle that is difficult to break.³

Based on the above, this article aims to further explore the role of social support in improving individual mental health. Through an in-depth literature review, it is hoped to identify the mechanisms by which social support functions and its influence on psychological well-being.

Methods

The method used in this article is a literature review where analysis is carried out from various literature sources. The literature search was conducted through Google Scholar and ResearchGate sources with a range of years between 2018-2024. The keywords used in the literature search were social support and mental health.

Results and discussion

According to Yang et al., 2020, social support plays a very important role in improving individual mental health. A strong social network can reduce the risk of mental disorders and improve overall psychological well-being. In this context, social support can be divided into two main categories: emotional support and practical support. Emotional support, which includes a sense of empathy, understanding and care from loved ones, serves as an effective protective barrier against stress and mental distress. When individuals feel supported, they are more likely to experience a sense of security and acceptance, which can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Positive interactions with friends and family also contribute to increased self-confidence and optimism, which are crucial in maintaining mental health. Practical support, on the other hand, relates to concrete help in overcoming everyday challenges, such as the provision of information, resources or physical assistance. Research shows that individuals who receive practical support feel more able to cope with life's stresses and difficulties. For example, support in the form of financial assistance, completion of household tasks, or access to healthcare can significantly reduce the mental burden individuals feel.¹

In a study conducted by Wickramaratne et al., 2022, social support has a significant impact on psychological well-being. Emotional support from family and friends serves as an effective protective mechanism against depression and anxiety. Individuals who experience this support tend to experience a decrease in symptoms of mental disorders thanks to the sense of security and acceptance they receive. In addition, practical support, which includes assistance in daily activities such as the provision of information or resources, has also shown a positive impact on stress management. This research suggests that individuals who receive practical support feel more capable of dealing with life's challenges, thus maintaining better mental health.³

According to Mboweni et al., 2023, social engagement in the community is also very important. Participation in social groups or community activities not only creates a sense of connectedness, but also strengthens an individual's social identity. This helps to reduce feelings of isolation and increase happiness. Social support also contributes to increased resilience, individuals who have strong support networks are better able to recover from traumatic experiences and better face future challenges.⁴

According to Bermejo et al., 2020, not all types of social support have the same effect. Individual preferences for certain types of support may vary based on social and cultural

contexts. Therefore, designing effective interventions requires an in-depth understanding of each individual's social context. It is critical to develop policies and intervention programs that focus on strengthening social support in the community. Inclusive and community-based approaches can improve the quality of support available, with the ultimate goal of improving individual mental health. In today's digital age, finding innovative ways to facilitate social support is also important, so that meaningful interactions are maintained. Further research is needed to explore strategies that can maximize the role of social support in supporting mental health across different walks of life.⁵

Research conducted by Hou et al., 2020, suggests that it is important to consider the role of technology in supporting social support. Digital platforms, such as social media and communication apps, can be effective tools to strengthen connections between individuals, especially in situations where physical interaction is limited. However, the use of these technologies must be balanced with an awareness of the potential negative impacts, such as feelings of alienation that can arise from virtual interactions that lack depth. Therefore, it is important to develop programs that not only promote direct social support, but also educate individuals on how to use technology wisely to improve mental health. With a comprehensive approach, social support can be maximized to create a healthier and more supportive environment for each individual.⁶

Conclusion

Social support is a key factor in improving an individual's mental health. Emotional and practical support, social engagement, and technology utilization can contribute significantly to psychological well-being. Therefore, it is important to develop policies and intervention programs that focus on strengthening social support in the community to create a healthier and more supportive environment for individuals.

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