Mental Health

Many of us have probably gone through a time where we experienced the disorientation and suffering of inexplicable health issues, unreasonable worries, and negative feelings that lead us to suffer immensely. During these times, we are at our lowest, refusing to cope and acknowledge our feelings, but deep down we have a burning desire to seek help. "Nearly 1 in 5 adults have been diagnosed with depression" (Howard). Mental health is a major issue, it is important to remember that mental illnesses are just as real as physical ones. The brain is just as equivalent and fragile to another organ in your body that can also easily sustain damages. Therefore leading to our whole body to be broken down and affected by "psychological disorders".

During the Covid-19 pandemic, I was one of those individuals that was quietly suffering and chose to cover it up due to shame and embarrassment. My days revolved around me lingering in my bedroom behind a screen for hours on end. I felt a lot of despair, rage, and loneliness as a result. I would hide these emotions from others. I tried convincing myself that I was ok, that this was only temporary and that these feelings would eventually go away. I could not fully comprehend what was going on, but rather that I felt mentally ill and lost. I felt miserable due to holding all the anguish and stress in. I eventually found myself to be more involved with my writing skills during quarantine. This would lead me to jot down notes and small writings to handle the misery. Going through my notes, I found a poem I wrote about three years ago related to mental health. There is no title for it but it goes like this;

"I feel like I'm drowning in this society, deep down in obscurity, forgotten and lost, not knowing where I belong. I don't belong in this society nor will I ever, unsteady and unstable, my mind is taking me to unknown places to which I don't belong. Maybe I don't exist in this world,

maybe this is just an illusion, with a story nobody knows. Even if this is an illusion, my feelings are real, my thoughts are real, my sentiments are real, I am real".

This leads us to the topic of mental health and psychological disorders. How do we indicate what is considered "normal behavior" and a "disorder"? To start off, we can begin by defining the term "psychological disorders". According to the textbook, psychological disorders "is a syndrome marked by a "clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognitions, emotion regulation, or behavior" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Disorders can vary from a number of different things. Oftentimes, psychological disorders are accompanied by "dysfunctional behaviors and emotions". When something starts interfering with your daily life, it would be considered an "disorder". For example, having a phobia of germs would not technically be considered a "disorder", rather a phobia, but when you progressively clean your house every second of the day, and it begins to interfere with school, work, or hobbies, it would then be considered a "disorder". Additionally, negative feelings and thoughts that continue to persist and don't go away overtime may indicate a psychological disorder. This is one of the most common signs of a psychological disorder in a person.

The pandemic was a time where we were isolated from the world around us, unable to seek social interactions. This led to people around the world to experience loneliness. This effect could have "implications for people's long-term mental and physical health, longevity and well-being" (Winerman). This shows that our environment can cause a drastic change in our behavior and emotions. The term "epigenetics", is "the study of the molecular ways by which environments can influence gene expression". Numerous research on humans have shown that there are long-term impacts as a result of cases like quarantining from the pandemic, exposure to pollutants, and other environmental factors. Basically, an environment can determine whether a

gene is likely to be expressed or not. In this case for some individual's, this would be the underlying factor of whether or not they develop a disorder. This is applicable to the Covid-19 pandemic scenario as many peoples' environments were suddenly changed leading to an increase of long-term mental and physical health implications (Winerman).

The most critical thing somebody can do for oneself is to ask for help. But regrettably, the stigma surrounding mental health prevents those suffering from seeking treatment. There is no need to stigmatize those with mental illnesses and to only make them feel more ashamed of themselves. "Mental health professionals need to be part of primary care teams to ensure that patients get complete care that addresses both mental and physical health" (Anderson). In our society, many people tend to associate someone's actions and behavior with negative stigmas connected to mental health. For example, we may see someone acting abnormally and instantly we jump to the conclusion that they are "delusional or crazy". The stigma attached to mental health is extremely harmful to those silently suffering. We must further educate ourselves and others to help foster those who are suffering. When mental illness is addressed just as equally to other conditions, more individual's will have the courage to come forward and receive the help they need.

The feeling of uneasiness and shyness are often brushed off with no diagnosis. However, this can be a persistent feeling that lingers and we can be at risk of "anxiety disorders". Certainly, we have all experienced some kind of paranoia and anxiousness in our lives that causes us to ultimately break down. Personally, I can say I have experienced "social anxiety". In the early ages of my life, I was a quiet kid, I despised having to make eye contact, and having to be in a room full of people was one of my biggest fears. I preferred being alone, but sometimes the loneliness would engulf you, relating back to my poem. Social anxiety disorder is something

I heavily relate to as it is something that I experienced growing up and still somewhat affects me today. Just like how the increase in loneliness during the pandemic had long term mental and physical effects on a person's wellbeing. The poem I wrote regards someone suffering from social anxiety disorder, where they feel out of place in the world due to their mental illness. They feel that society is drowning them due to the loud voices and roars of the outside world. They eventually recognize that they are indeed real and suffering deeply.

Overall, looking back at the poem and mental illnesses, our brain is a fragile yet fascinating organ. One's psychological, emotional, and social well-being are all parts of their mental health. It is important to continue fighting the stigma that surrounds mental health, educating others, and ultimately seeking help when battling mental illnesses.

` **Citations:**

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