

PSYCHOLOGY OF LIFESTYLE: A GATEWAY TO MENTAL STABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The Psychology of Lifestyle addresses the role psychology can play in reversing the trend of deleterious lifestyle choices. Many lifestyle behaviours such as diet, exercise, social interaction, and substance use are related to physical and mental health. Important lifestyle behaviours include exercise, nutrition, substance use, social interaction, time in nature, and meditation or relaxation. It considers the common characteristics of lifestyle behaviours and reflects on how we can inform and improve interventions to promote healthy lifestyles. The biopsychosocial model and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the psychology of lifestyles as a gateway to mental stability. This presentation will explore the interplay between lifestyle choices, mental health outcomes, and strategies for promoting mental stability. The research relied heavily on literature reviews, theoretical frameworks, and anecdotal evidence. It was recommended that individuals should choose wisely positive lifestyles to improve their physical and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Mental health, Psychology of lifestyle, Behaviour, Personality, Habit

INTRODUCTION

It is becoming universally recognized that lifestyle affects health enormously. Lifestyle is a pattern of behaviours, habits, and attitudes that an individual adopts and maintains over time. Lifestyle choices play a critical role in maintaining mental stability. Improving lifestyles is thought to be one of the most effective means of reducing mortality and morbidity. According to World Health

Organization (2019), lifestyle is a patterns of behavioural choices from the alternatives that are available to people according to their socio-economic -circumstances and the ease with which they are able to choose certain ones over others. Also, Cockerham defined lifestyle as collective patterns of health-related behaviour based on choices from options available to people according to their life chances.

The World Health Organization (2019) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community. Mental stability refers to the ability to maintain emotional balance, resilience, and a sense of well-being in the face of life's challenges and stressors. It involves being able to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in a healthy and adaptive way. Our daily habits, behaviours, and choices can significantly impact our mental well-being. Also, unhealthy lifestyle behaviours are a driving force for chronic diseases, high healthcare costs and poor health outcomes (Merlo & Vela, 2021; Umenweke, et al., 2018).

More also; Psychology of Lifestyle is a growing field in Psychology with interest in living a healthy life that promotes mental stability through practice of daily habits, behaviour and choices that can significantly impact our mental well-being(Kathryn & Dominic,2009).The psychology of lifestyles plays a crucial role in achieving mental stability through maintaining good nutrition, physical activity, sleep, social connection, stress management, and reduction or avoidance of substance use. The discipline focuses on the role of these key health behaviours for

the prevention, treatment, and/or reversal of many chronic health conditions and optimization of overall health (Morton et al., 2018).

Factors in psychology of lifestyles that can influence mental stability include:

- (1) daily habits such as: sleep patterns, exercise, nutrition, and leisure activities.
- (2) Behavioural choices such as: substance use, risk-taking, and coping mechanisms.
- (3) Environmental influences such as: Social relationships, work-life balance, and living situation.
- (4) Personality traits such as: values, attitudes, and motivations.

Psychology of Lifestyle is a gateway to mental stability due to: (1) Lifestyle choices, such as exercise: diet, and sleep which influences mental stability in the production and regulation of neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins, which can impact mood and mental well-being, a healthy lifestyle helps to regulate stress hormones like cortisol, which can influence mental stability. Also, stress hormones like cortisol can contribute to anxiety and depression when elevated (Okoye, et.al, 2017; Onyemaechi, et al., 2022). Healthy lifestyle supports cognitive function, including attention, memory, and problem-solving, which can improve mental clarity and stability. (2) Consistent healthy habits, such as regular exercise or meditation, can lead to positive behavioural changes and improved mental well-being; a healthy lifestyle helps build emotional resilience, enabling individuals to cope with stress, adversity, and negative emotions. (3) Lifestyle choices, such as social connections and relaxation techniques, can influence mood regulation and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. (4) A healthy lifestyle often involves social

connections, such as exercise groups or volunteering, which provide emotional support and a sense of belonging, (5) Participating in community activities and events can foster social connections, improve mental well-being, and provide a sense of purpose.

A balanced diet and adequate sleep support is essential for maintaining mental stability. Balanced Diet such as a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins supports mental health. adequate Sleep of 7-9 hours of sleep per night helps regulate emotions, reduces stress, and improves mood are among the healthy habits that promotes mental stability. Regular Exercise reduces stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms. Stress Management skills like regular mindfulness practice reduces stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms. Other Stress Management techniques includes: relaxation techniques activities like: deep breathing, or progressive muscle relaxation help manage stress, engaging in hobbies, reading, or spending time in nature can help reduce stress (Onyemaechi, et al., 2022; Uzoma, et al., 2021). Building and maintaining relationships with family, friends, and community supports mental stability. By incorporating a healthy lifestyle, individuals can improve their mental stability, reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance their overall well-being.

Mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, are increasingly prevalent worldwide, affecting millions of people with significant consequences for individuals, families, and communities (Kessler et al., 2005; Merlo & Vela, 2021) and imposing a significant burden on healthcare systems (World Health Organization, 2019). Despite the growing recognition of the importance of lifestyle factors in maintaining mental health, there is a lack of understanding

of the specific lifestyle factors that contribute to mental stability and how they interact with psychological and biological factors (Harris, 1995; Schildkraut, 1965). Current interventions for mental health disorders often focus on pharmaceutical treatments or psychotherapy, with limited emphasis on lifestyle modification and prevention (Hofmann et al., 2010; Tackett & Lahey, 2017). Also, Mental health disorders are often stigmatized, leading to social isolation and decreased opportunities for social support and connection (Cohen et al., 2015; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015; Okonkwo, et al., 2023). With all of these stated problems, there is a need for research that explores the relationship between Psychology of lifestyle and mental stability, with a focus on understanding how lifestyle factors influence mental health outcomes. This study aims to address this research gap by examining the impact of Psychology of lifestyle on mental stability and identifying the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship.

Objective of the Study

The objectives of this research can thus be summarized as follows;

1. To explore the relationship between lifestyle choices and mental stability, with a focus on understanding how lifestyle factors influence mental health outcomes.
2. To examine the impact of lifestyle factors such as physical activity, nutrition, sleep, and social connections on mental stability.

3. To investigate the role of psychological factors such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation in promoting mental stability through lifestyle choices.
4. To identify the biopsychosocial mechanisms underlying the relationship between lifestyle choices and mental stability.
4. To explore the potential of lifestyle modification as a strategy for promoting mental stability and preventing mental health disorders.
5. To inform the development of evidence-based interventions and policies aimed at promoting mental stability through lifestyle choices.

Significant of the Research

1. This study significance in contributing to a better understanding of the specific lifestyle factors that contribute to mental stability and how they interact with psychological and biological factors.
2. By identifying the lifestyle factors that contribute to mental stability, this study will be relevant in making effective interventions and prevention strategies for mental health disorders.
3. By promoting lifestyle modification and prevention, this study will be relevant in contributing in reducing the economic burden of mental health disorders on healthcare systems.
4. By promoting a greater understanding of the importance of lifestyle factors in maintaining mental health, this study can contribute to reducing stigma and social isolation associated with mental health disorders.

5. This study aims to inform health policy and decision-making at the local, national, and international levels, promoting a greater emphasis on lifestyle modification and prevention in mental health care.

6. Enhancing Mental Health Promotion: This study can contribute to the development of effective mental health promotion strategies, focusing on lifestyle modification and prevention.

7. Improving Quality of Life: By promoting mental stability and well-being, this study can contribute to improving the quality of life.

Theoretical Frameworks

The Biopsychosocial Model

The biopsychosocial model is a comprehensive framework that explains the interplay between biological, psychological, and social factors. The model recognizes that biological factors, such as genetics and brain chemistry, interact with psychological factors, such as thoughts and emotions, and social factors, such as culture and environment, to shape human behaviour and health. Biological factors refer to the physiological and genetic aspects of an individual's life. These factors can influence behaviour, health, and disease, and can be shaped by genetics, brain chemistry, hormones, and other physiological processes.

The Genetic predispositions can influence traits, behaviours, and disease susceptibility (Harris, 1995). For example, individuals with a family history of depression may be more likely to experience depression themselves. In addition, imbalances in neurotransmitters, such as serotonin,

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dopamine, and endorphins, can impact mood, motivation, and behaviour (Schildkraut, 1965). For example, individuals with depression may experience decreased levels of serotonin. Psychological factors refer to the mental processes, emotions, and behaviours that influence an individual's experiences and outcomes. These factors can be shaped by personality, cognition, emotions, and learning.

Personality characteristics, such as extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness, can influence behaviour, relationships, and mental health (Tackett & Lahey, 2017). For example, individuals with high levels of neuroticism may be more likely to experience anxiety.

Also, thought patterns, such as rumination or optimism, can impact mental health, behaviour, and relationships (Beck, 1976). For example, individuals with a negative cognitive style may be more likely to experience depression. Social factors refer to the environmental, cultural, and social influences that shape an individual's experiences, behaviours, and outcomes. These factors can be shaped by family, culture, socioeconomic status, and social networks. Supportive relationships with family, friends, or community can promote mental stability and influence lifestyle choices (Cohen et al., 2015, Onyemaechi, et al., 2025; Onyemaechi & Okafor, 2025). For example, individuals with strong social support networks may be more likely to engage in healthy behaviours.

Furthermore, cultural expectations and values can shape behaviour, attitudes, and Personality characteristics, such as extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness (Tackett & Lahey, 2017).

For example, individuals with high levels of neuroticism may be more likely to experience anxiety.

Access to resources, education, and healthcare can influence mental health.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory is a widely recognized theoretical framework that explains human motivation, behaviour, and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Self-Determination Theory, human behaviour is motivated by three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

1. **Autonomy:** When individuals engage in lifestyle activities that align with their values and interests, they experience intrinsic motivation, which fosters a sense of autonomy (Deci, 1971). Pursuing self-endorsed goals, such as exercising or meditating, enhances autonomy and promotes mental stability (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).
2. **Competence:** Engaging in lifestyle activities that provide opportunities for mastery, such as learning a new skill or achieving a fitness goal, enhances competence and promotes mental stability (Bandura, 1997). Developing self-efficacy through successful experiences in lifestyle activities, such as cooking or time management, fosters competence and mental stability (Bandura, 1997).
3. **Relatedness:** Engaging in lifestyle activities that promote social connections, such as team sports or group hobbies, fosters relatedness and mental stability (Cohen et al., 2015).

Receiving emotional support from others, such as family or friends, enhances relatedness and promotes mental stability (Cohen et al., 2015).

Empirical Review

Numerous empirical studies have investigated the relationship between lifestyle factors and mental health outcomes, providing evidence for the importance of lifestyle in maintaining mental stability. For example, a meta-analysis of 30 studies found that regular physical activity was associated with reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression (Schuch et al., 2016). With total sample size of 2,257 participants, age range 18-65 years the participants were engaged in aerobic exercise, resistance training, and combined exercise. The duration of the exercise was 6-24 weeks. The intensity of the exercise was moderate to high intensity. The results were significance at $p < 0.001$. The finding revealed that regular physical activity was associated with reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression.

In another study, a longitudinal study of 1,000 adults found that regular physical activity was associated with improved mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety (Harris et al., 2006). This study by Harris, O'Moore, Kirk, & McCoy(2006) published in Journal of Clinical Psychology in which Physical activity and mental health in a cohort of adults of 1,000 participants age range 25-65 years in a follow-up period of 2 years self-reported physical activity questionnaire. The outcome of the findings revealed regular physical activity was associated with improved mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of depression and

anxiety ($p < 0.001$). A dose-response relationship was observed between physical activity and mental health outcomes, with greater physical activity associated with greater improvements in mental health ($p < 0.01$). Social support and quality of life were found to mediate the relationship between physical activity and mental health outcomes ($p < 0.05$). The findings suggest that physical activity may be a useful adjunctive treatment for mental health disorders. Also, a systematic review of 21 studies found that a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins was associated with improved mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety (Lai et al., 2014). A randomized controlled trial of 100 adults found that a Mediterranean-style diet was associated with improved mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety (Jacka et al., 2017).

Furthermore, a meta-analysis of 21 studies found that sleep disturbances were associated with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety (Baglioni et al., 2016). A longitudinal study of 1,000 adults found that sleep disturbances were associated with poor mental health outcomes, including increased symptoms of depression and anxiety (Harvard et al., 2017). A meta-analysis of 148 studies found that social isolation was associated with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). A longitudinal study of 1,000 adults found that social connections were associated with improved mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety (Cohen et al., 2015).

A systematic review of 22 studies found that lifestyle modification programs, including physical activity, nutrition, and stress management, were associated with improved mental health outcomes,

including reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety (Morton et al., 2018). A randomized controlled trial of 100 adults found that a lifestyle modification program, including physical activity, nutrition, and stress management, was associated with improved mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety (Merlo & Vela, 2021). Overall, the empirical evidence suggests that lifestyle factors, including physical activity, nutrition, sleep, social connections, and lifestyle modification, play a critical role in maintaining mental stability and reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Applications of Psychology of Lifestyles: A Gateway to Mental Stability

1. **Mental Health Clinics:** Integrating lifestyle interventions into mental health clinics can help patients develop healthy habits and improve their mental well-being.
2. **Workplace Wellness Programs:** Companies can implement lifestyle-based wellness programs to promote employee mental health, reduce stress, and increase productivity.
3. **School-Based Interventions:** Schools can incorporate lifestyle education and interventions into their curricula to promote mental health and well-being among students.
4. **Community-Based Initiatives:** Community centers, churches, and other organizations can offer lifestyle-based programs and services to promote mental health and well-being among community members.

5. **Healthcare Policy:** Policymakers can use research on the psychology of lifestyles to form healthcare policies that promote lifestyle-based interventions and prevention strategies.
6. **Corporate Wellness Initiatives:** Companies can partner with wellness providers to offer lifestyle-based interventions and services to their employees, promoting mental health and well-being.
7. **Sports and Fitness Industry:** The sports and fitness industry can apply the principles of the psychology of lifestyles to develop programs and services that promote mental well-being and resilience.
8. **Public Health Campaigns:** Public health campaigns can raise awareness about the importance of lifestyle choices for mental health, promoting healthy habits and providing resources for support.
9. **Therapeutic Settings:** Therapists can incorporate lifestyle interventions into their practice, helping clients develop healthy habits and improve their mental well-being.
10. **Support Groups:** Support groups can focus on lifestyle-based interventions, providing a community for individuals to share experiences, receive support, and promote mental stability.
11. **Health Coaching:** Health coaches can work with clients to identify and achieve lifestyle goals, promoting mental well-being and overall health.

12. Research has consistently shown that exercise can effectively reduce symptoms of depression and maintain well-being, both as a primary treatment and in conjunction with medication or therapy. Physical activity programs can take many forms, including walking, running, fitness classes, organized sports, and even brief episodes of exercise throughout the day.
13. A healthy diet focusing on whole foods, such as vegetables, fruits, beans, unprocessed grains, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and fish, can have positive effects on mental health.
14. Nutrition counseling can help individuals develop healthy eating habits, which can reduce the risk of depression and improve overall mental well-being.
15. Lifestyle interventions, including physical activity and nutrition counseling, can improve mental and physical health outcomes for people with severe mental illness living in supported housing facilities.

Conclusion

This study has explored the relationship between the psychology of lifestyle and mental stability, with a focus on understanding how lifestyle factors influence mental stability. The findings suggest

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that lifestyle factors such as physical activity, nutrition, sleep, social connections, and stress management are critical for maintaining mental stability (Harris, 1995; Schildkraut, 1965). Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of psychological mechanisms such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation in promoting mental stability through lifestyle choices (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Bandura, 1997; Achebe & Onyemaechi, 2023)

Implications for Mental Health Practice and Research

The study of Psychology of Lifestyles; A Gateway to Mental Stability has several implications:

1. By exploring the implications of the study, we can better understand how the psychology of lifestyles can be applied to promote mental stability and overall well-being in various contexts.
2. The study highlights the importance of lifestyle-based interventions in promoting mental stability.
3. Mental health professionals can use this knowledge to develop personalized lifestyle plans for their clients.
- 4 The study's findings can inform health promotion and disease prevention strategies, emphasizing the role of lifestyle choices in maintaining mental stability and overall well-being.
5. The study contributes to the existing literature on the psychology of lifestyles and mental stability, providing a foundation for future research in this area.

6. The study's results can form the development of educational programs and training initiatives focused on promoting mental stability and healthy lifestyles.
7. The study's findings can inform policy decisions and public health initiatives aimed at promoting mental health and well-being, emphasizing the importance of lifestyle-based interventions.
8. The study's results can empower individuals to take control of their mental health by adopting healthy lifestyle choices and habits.
9. The study highlights the importance of promoting healthy lifestyles in the workplace, which can lead to improved employee well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction.
10. The study's findings can help in forming community-based initiatives aimed at promoting mental health and well-being, emphasizing the importance of lifestyle-based interventions.
11. The finding of the study can inform the development of healthcare systems that prioritize lifestyle-based interventions and prevention strategies.

Recommendations

1. Future studies should use a longitudinal design to establish causality between lifestyle factors and mental stability.
2. Future studies should use objective measures of lifestyle factors, such as autography or GPS tracking, to reduce biases and limitations.

3. Diverse sample: Future studies should aim to recruit a diverse sample in terms of age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status to increase the generalization of the findings.
4. Future studies should aim to explore the mechanisms underlying the relationship between psychology of lifestyle and mental stability, such as the role of self- discipline self-awareness and self-regulation.
5. Develop community-based interventions that promote healthy lifestyles and mental stability through social support, education, and environmental changes.
6. Implement workplace wellness initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles and mental stability among employees.
7. Advocate for policy-level interventions that support healthy lifestyles and mental stability.
8. Individuals should prioritize lifestyle modification and prevention as a key strategy for maintaining mental stability
9. Mental health professionals should work with clients to identify and modify lifestyle factors that contribute to mental health disorders.
10. Policymakers and program developers should prioritize the development of policies and programs that promote mental health and well-being through lifestyle modification and prevention.

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