



SW813 A psycho-biosocial exploration of mental distress & wellbeing and its influence on Sustainable Development Goals 4-0-0 4

School for Social & Behavioral Sciences

Level: PhD level Theory & Practice (others can also apply)

Credit Hours: 4 (semester course)

Instructor: Dr. Malini (LM) Frey

Semester: February 2021 (even semester)

Course Description

This course will help the student understand some basic information about the role of mental distress on national and global wellbeing. The course will explore indicators of mental distress, and the role of mental illness in the Global Burden of Disease, and in attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will consider why mental illness and suicides are increasing, and how this relates to extremely scant funding (in multiple countries) allocated by governments to the implementation of mental health resources. The student will be introduced to basic theory, to the role of early adversity in compromised mental wellbeing, and to the neural correlates of mental wellbeing vs distress. We will also explore the role of the mind in building psychological fortitude.

Objectives

1. Understand the differences among various levels of mental distress & wellbeing
2. Learn about the indicators of psychological wellbeing or morbidity, including stress, early adversity, and poverty in fostering varied psychological states
3. Sustainable Development Goals: What does Mental Health have to do with attaining these?
 - a. Recognize the substantial impact of mental disorders and lack of access to treatment on the socio-economic wellbeing of societies and nations.
4. Develop understanding and knowledge of vulnerable populations, and ethical requirements for research with marginalized groups
5. Gain an aptitude to critically analyze the ethics and validity of research involving vulnerable participants
6. Explore the relationship between neuronal brain activity, mental distress, and mental health
7. Understand the powerful role of higher values & mind regulation in restoring mental strength and wellbeing

Course Outline

Unit I. Understanding global mental wellbeing & mental distress.

- Differences between various definitions of mental health vs distress
- Global Burden of Disease –
 - DALYs, YLDs - Life Expectancy vs Healthy Life Expectancy
 - Note: DALYs – disability adjusted life years
 - YLDs – Years of life lived with disability
 - Common Mental Disorders, suicide, addictions, etc.
 - Epidemiology of Global Mental Health
 - SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals: What does Mental Health have to do with it?
- Indicators of psychological morbidities
 - Poverty and psychological morbidities: Is economic prosperity enough for life satisfaction?
- Mental Health infrastructures in various countries & India
 - Policy and their applications – Who is responsible for narrowing the MH gap?

Unit II. Stress and mental vulnerabilities – Introduction to theoretical models

- Bio-psychosocial Theory of mental disorders
- Polyvagal Theory: Complicated Mental Disorders
 - emotion regulation, memory & dissociative states
- Allostasis: Theory of stress response and Chronic Poverty Stress (CPS)

Unit III. Introduction to neurological correlates of mental wellbeing and morbidities & how these influence SDGs

- Poverty and neurological architecture of the brain
 - Environmental events' (e.g. ACES, stress, poverty, etc.) influence on the ultra-sensitive developing brain
- Stress & psychological morbidities from birth through adulthood to mortality
 - Early child adversity outcomes (morbidities and mortality)
 - Endogenous & Exogenous expressions of mental disorders
 - The relationship between physical and mental health
- Neurological correlates of higher spiritual principles (HSPs) - reductions of psychological stress and morbidity

Unit IV. How and Why: Ethics and Mental Health research with vulnerable populations

- What and who are 'vulnerable populations' in terms of research?
 - Clarifying the purpose, rationale, & relevance of the research study
 - Assessing those with single or multiple vulnerabilities (e.g., illiteracy, poverty, psychosocial & political vulnerabilities)
- Qualifications: Ethics requirements to conduct responsible research
 - Power & Compliance: Awareness of power dynamics between researcher and participant
 - Science vs voyeurism (ICMR); Providing benefits vs discomfort
- LMIC validated research measures for (partial list):
 - Examples: Quality of Life; Life Satisfaction, etc.

- Qualitative research questions – how to construct for vulnerable groups

Unit V. Nature of the Mind. Perception, Projection, Introspection

- Generational Cycles of:
 - Poverty, abuse, mental distress
 - How do these issues perpetuate poverty and interrupt SDGs? How can the pattern be interrupted and redirected?
- Global Epidemic of Mental Illness– Why are mental disorders increasing?
 - Psychotropic Drugs for MH issues: Do they *really* work?
 - Independent clinical trials assessing placebo vs antidepressants
 - Pharmaceutical clinical trials assessing placebo vs antidepressants
- The Power of the Mind:
 - Neurological studies: Influence of HSPs (Higher Spiritual Principles) mental wellbeing and pro-social behavior
 - Cultivating inner strength, resiliency, and wisdom

Course Teaching Methods for Deeper Learning

- Activities (e.g., active online data maps to explore the MH conditions in various countries)
- Discussions
- Critical Analysis of a Published Research Paper (Unit 4-part 2)
- Debate (*Options*: Unit 1-part 4; Unit 4–part 1; Unit 4-part 2)
- Presentations & Short Paper

Assessment

1. Brief Quizzes – 25%
2. Class participation – 20%
3. Case Practice: Student will assess access to mental health resources/treatment in select countries and how this might relate to the SDGs – 30%
4. Brief paper demonstrating your knowledge from the course material. Topic to be assigned – 25%

Outcomes

By the end of this course you will be able to:

1. Have a basic understanding of levels of psychological states
2. Be able to understand and explain the GBD DALYs for non-communicable diseases, particularly mental illness
3. Have a basic understanding of the negative impact of mental disorders on national and global socioeconomic wellbeing
4. Gain knowledge and understanding of the relationship between multidimensional stress and compromised mental states, particularly among marginalized groups
5. Increase your sensitivity to the conditions of vulnerable groups, and adjust research approaches to their needs and protection

6. Ability to understand the influence of adversity on the brain and behavior
7. Recognized and apply the positive effects of higher spiritual principles on reducing mental distress and enhancing mental health

Resources (partial list)

Arah, O. A., Westert, G. P., Hurst, J., & Klazinga, N. S. (2006). A conceptual framework for the OECD health care quality indicators project. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, *18*(suppl_1), 5-13.

World Health Organization, & Annex, B. (2016). tables of health statistics by country, WHO region and globally. *En: World health statistics*, 103-20.

Furber, G., Leach, M., Guy, S., & Segal, L. (2017). Developing a broad categorisation scheme to describe risk factors for mental illness, for use in prevention policy and planning. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, *51*(3), 230-240.

Global Burden of Disease Studies: DALYs from mental health and substance use disorders, World, 1990 to 2017

González, M. G., Swanson, D. P., Lynch, M., & Williams, G. C. (2016). Testing satisfaction of basic psychological needs as a mediator of the relationship between socioeconomic status and physical and mental health. *Journal of health psychology*, *21*(6), 972-982.

Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., & Sachs, J. (2012). World happiness report [2012].

Sachs, J. D. (2012). From millennium development goals to sustainable development goals. *The lancet*, *379*(9832), 2206-2211.

World Health Organization, & Annex, B. (2016). tables of health statistics by country, WHO region and globally. *En: World health statistics*, 103-20.