

# **Mental Health, Mental Illness, Risk, & Resilience**

## **Mental Health vs. Mental Illness**

Mental health refers to a state of well-being wherein an individual can realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community. It is a positive attribute, highlighting social and emotional capabilities rather than merely the absence of diseases or infirmities (World Health Organization, 2021).

On the other hand, mental illnesses are health conditions involving changes in thinking, emotion, or behavior (or a combination of these), often associated with distress and problems functioning in social, work, or family activities. Mental illnesses include many conditions that vary in severity, ranging from mild to moderate to severe (American Psychiatric Association, 2020).

## **Conceptualization**

The distinction between mental health and mental illness is crucial as it affects how we perceive and respond to these issues. Health is seen as a resource for everyday life, emphasizing personal and social resources and physical capacities. Therefore, a health-promoting approach enables people to control their health and its determinants to improve their well-being.

## **Influence on Assessment and Diagnosis**

This conceptualization significantly influences the way professionals assess and diagnose mental health issues. The biopsychosocial model of health, considering biological, psychological, and social factors, is often used in assessment and diagnosis. This model emphasizes the importance of understanding health and illness through multiple lenses (Engel, 1977).

## **Risk & Resilience**

Risk factors can increase an individual's likelihood of developing a mental illness. These may include genetic predisposition, adverse life experiences, and certain biological factors. Conversely, resilience factors can buffer individuals against mental illness and enable them to maintain or regain mental health after experiencing challenges. Resilience is not merely a trait that individuals have or do not have but rather a set of behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed (American Psychological Association, 2020).

## **Risk and Resilience of Clients**

A comprehensive assessment of mental health must consider both risk and resilience factors. Resilience-based strategies can support individuals' mental health by promoting adaptive coping strategies, fostering social support, and encouraging self-care practices. Similarly, identifying risk factors can inform preventive and intervention efforts to reduce the likelihood of developing mental illnesses.

## **Importance of the Variable**

The variables of risk and resilience are paramount in the prevention and treatment of mental illness. Targeting modifiable risk factors can tailor interventions to individuals' unique needs and circumstances. Enhancing resilience can equip individuals with the skills and resources necessary to cope with stress and adversity, thereby reducing the impact of mental health issues on their quality of life.

## **The Development of Psychopathology**

Understanding the interplay of risk and resilience is crucial in developing psychopathology. It helps professionals move beyond a narrow focus on symptoms and develop comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies that account for individuals' unique risks and strengths.

In conclusion, understanding the distinction between mental health and mental illness, their conceptualization, and the role of risk and resilience in mental health is fundamental for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. These constructs inform the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness and highlight the importance of promoting mental health as an integral part of overall health and well-being.

## **References**

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