**HOW DOES WELLBEING AFFECT RELATIONSHIPS?**

**INTRODUCTION**

This paper explores the topic on how wellbeing affects relationships. It is important to know because it might help reveal why some relationships are not fulfilling as they should. The problem might be an aspect of wellbeing that is not well cultivated. The paper will explore what different researchers say on the different types of wellbeing and how they have an effect on relationships.

What is wellbeing and what are relationships?

**WELLBEING**

What is wellbeing? Wellbeing is defined as being content, having good physical condition and generally being successful in life. It also comprises being motivated and having meaning in life, being able to cope with life’s stresses, being of sound mind and being fulfilled with what you are doing with your life, (Psychology Today, 2019 para. 1).

**RELATIONSHIPS**

A relationship is defined as “a continuing and often committed association between two or more people as in a family, friendship, marriage, partnership, or other interpersonal link in which the participants have some degree of influence on each other’s thoughts, feelings, and actions,” (American Psychological Association [APA], n.d).

**Different Types of Wellbeing**

Different researchers categorize wellbeing into up to eight different categories. The five main types according to Psychology Today are; physical, social, emotional, workplace and societal wellbeing. Simran n.d., adds two more categories which are financial or economic wellbeing and spiritual wellbeing. The researcher will delve into all the above seven to investigate how they could affect relationships.

**Physical Wellbeing**

 Physical wellbeing is the ability to sustain a healthy quality of life that allows people to get the most out of their daily activities without unnecessary exhaustion or bodily strain. It includes nurturing the body and realizing that every day habits and behaviors have an important impact on overall health, wellbeing and quality of life (Australian National University [ANU] n.d. para.1). This basically means taking care of the body improves how people feel about themselves.

According to Lear, 2020, keeping fit has a lot of health benefits and can result in improved connection and attraction among people. Those who exercise report higher satisfaction in their relationships. And this is even stronger for people who exercise with their partners. Compared to non-exercisers, married people who exercise reported more positive marital events and fewer negative ones. This proves that relationships are positively impacted by nurturing physical wellbeing. While taking care of the body to keep healthy and fit, there is an added advantage of improving relationships especially when done together.

To prove the point further scientifically, Lear, 2020 goes on to say that when exercise is done, the body releases hormones such as endocannabinoids and endorphins. Endocannabinoids work on the reward areas of the brain — the same system affected by marijuana — and improve mood. Endorphins are the body’s natural opioids: the feel-good hormones that block out pain. As a result of these hormones, people feel happier after exercise, even after a single session. The effect of exercise is long-lasting and is associated with more positive social engagement, even into the next day. This may be because happier people smile more and smiling people are viewed as more attractive. A classic study that purposely created situations to increase adrenaline release and anxiety found a relationship between anxiety and sexual arousal. This is termed ‘misattribution of arousal’, in which arousal of any sort, such as from anxiety or exercise, can be misinterpreted as sexual arousal by the body. Indeed, following a 15-minute exercise session, adults reported greater attraction to pictures of the opposite sex compared to those who didn’t exercise, with the attraction increasing based on perceived indicators of exercise intensity. Science therefore supports that in the process of improving physical wellbeing the body undergoes changes which positively impact how people relate to others.

Leah, 2020 finalizes by saying exercise also improves confidence and self-image, which enhances attractiveness. Confidence, or self-efficacy (belief in own abilities), tends to be tied to how much exercise is done. When it comes to self-esteem and body image these too are greater in people who exercise, and the more frequently they exercise, the greater the self-esteem.

**Economic Wellbeing**

“Economic well-being is defined as having present and future financial security. Present financial security includes the ability of individuals, families, and communities to consistently meet their basic needs (including food, housing, utilities, health care, transportation, education, child care, clothing, and paid taxes), and have control over their day-to-day finances. It also includes the ability to make economic choices and feel a sense of security, satisfaction, and personal fulfillment with one’s personal finances and employment pursuits. Future financial security includes the ability to absorb financial shocks, meet financial goals, build financial assets, and maintain adequate income throughout the life-span,” (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2016, para. 1). As the above research explains, economic wellbeing is feeling secure that daily and future needs can be handled with one’s financial resources and planning. This leads to one going about life knowing that whatever the financial needs that may come, they can be handled without a problem.

According to Mannion, 2023, studies have shown that couples who have similar spending habits, savings goals, and attitudes towards money are more likely to have a successful long-term relationship. By understanding each other's financial habits and priorities, couples can work together to achieve their goals and avoid financial conflicts. He concludes by saying financial compatibility is all about understanding each other's spending habits, debt, savings goals, financial priorities, and attitudes towards money. These are important factors because they directly affect a future together, and they can cause significant stress if they're not aligned. This view by Mannion, 2023, clearly explains economic wellbeing can affect relationships in that, for people choosing to live or work together, they have to ensure their economic wellbeing will be assured by their partner. Should their economic wellbeing be threatened by their partner’s misconduct it could lead to conflict which eventually can lead to ending the existing relationship. This therefore proves that economic wellbeing does affect relationships.

**Social Wellbeing**

“Social well-being can be defined as the sharing, developing, and sustaining of meaningful relationships with others. This allows you to feel authentic and valued, and provides a sense of connectedness and belonging,” (Sinclair, 2020, para.3). Social wellbeing therefore means being able to mingle with others and reaping the benefits of the connection made.

According to British Columbia Ministry of health and Addictions (n.d.), healthy social wellbeing can directly impact things like your stress hormones, blood pressure, and heart rate. It can also provide benefits years down the road, reducing the risk of health conditions like dementia. Building social wellbeing is an important way to strengthen emotional wellbeing. It can increase happiness and give a sense of purpose and belonging. This can add to one’s resilience. People have a story. And this can affect how they connect with others. If they have had challenging or traumatic experiences in the past, connection may feel difficult. Forms of connection are always changing, and there is support available that can help one feel trusting and safe when connecting with others. Building communication skills, active listening, empathy, and kindness can contribute to positive relationships. These are all social skills that anyone can learn and work on in any time of your life. Sometimes, it may feel hard to maintain social connections, or work on social skills. This can be especially true if one already feel stress in their life. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to developing social wellbeing. It’s important that one take steps that make sense for them.

From this research we can infer that social wellbeing can impact the way you interact with people. If there are past negative experiences, they can cause shying away from relationships. There is however help that can be given to those that suffer from negative experiences to help them boost their social wellbeing. This will in turn help them to form relationships which will be of benefit to them and boost their overall wellbeing

**Emotional Wellbeing**

Melkonian, 2018, defines Emotional well-being as the ability to produce positive emotions, moods, thoughts, and feelings, and adapt when confronted with adversity and stressful situations. She also adds that emotional well-being allows one to focus on the positive, and manage the negative emotions and feelings one may have in a given situation. This can help forge stronger relationships.

Sinclair, 2020, adds that taking time to engage with activities that generate positive emotion in you is as important as managing negative emotions. For example, research has pointed again and again to the power of gratitude for generating positive feelings. Make a practice of taking a pause every day to be grateful for three specific things. Happiness researcher Shawn Achor suggests they be three new things, every day, to prime your brain to be always looking for something new and positive.

From this research it can be inferred that emotional wellbeing being the ability to control what emotions are exuded to others; it can affect relationships because depending on what is being exuded, people can respond positively or negatively. This would in turn affect our overall wellbeing negatively or positively.

**Workplace Wellbeing**

International Labour Organization [ILO], n.d., explains that workplace wellbeing relates to all aspects of working life, from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work and work organization.

Sinclair, 2020 adds that workplace well-being might also encompass the nature of the work and how one feels about it — is there growth, is there preparation for the future and realizing potential, or is the feeling being stuck and micromanaged? A workplace that cares for one’s personal and professional well-being provides solid structures, fair rules, and safe relationships that allow one to accomplish, achieve and progress in meaningful ways. Much time is spent at work that many social relationships are formed and developed in the workplace. For many people, especially younger workers, relationships that start in the workplace can be some of the most important and meaningful as they shape how transitions are experienced in life.

This research shows that workplace wellbeing which is in general how workers feel about their work environment, does affect relationships because being the environment where a living is made, if not safe, it will affect the overall wellbeing. The workplace is where the financial wellbeing can be secured. If the environment is not conducive then relationships that are affected by overall wellbeing will be affected.

**Societal Wellbeing**

Sinclair, 2020, defines societal well-being as the ability to participate, feel valued as a member of, and feel connected to a wider social environment. For example, the local community, society as a whole, and the environment people live in. Feeling like one can make a meaningful impact on the people and world around improves sense of well-being. It can also tangibly improve the quality of the community, creating greater societal well-being.

Sinclair, 2020 also adds that taking part in community improvement activities almost always requires working with others who live nearby. For example, when a neighborhood organizes to rehabilitate a city park, people from different age groups may find themselves manning an information booth or shoveling dirt side by side over the course of many weekends. Parents will meet other parents as they clean up a playground. Sharing these larger, unfamiliar activities with others can form strong bonds and open up relationships that might not form in the context of normal professional or personal life.

The above research reveals that societal wellbeing, which is how one feels in their society, can affect relationships if they feel isolated which may lead to them not joining others in the activities that build the environment and society. Societal wellbeing can be affected when there is inequality and segregation as seen many times in history. This can lead to conflict and people not coming together for the greater good. This therefore proves that relationships can be affected by societal wellbeing.

**Spiritual Wellbeing**

Spiritual health is about the relationship with oneself, others, the natural world and deity. The basic characteristics of spiritual wellbeing are a good lifestyle, relationship with others, asking about the significance and purpose of life, and the existence or experience beyond the ordinary or physical level (Ghaderi et al., 2018).

A research published by the American Psychological Association, 2018 revealed that adolescents who attend religious services with one or both of their parents are more likely to feel greater well-being while romantic partners who pray for their “significant others” experience greater relationship commitment.

From the above it can therefore be inferred that spiritual wellbeing which is how people related with themselves, nature and God can indeed affect relationships. Young ones who experience church environment end up adopting a positive attitude. Those who pray for their significant others experience relationship commitment because they believe that their prayer for their loved one will be heard. This proves that spiritual wellbeing does affect relationships.

**CONCLUSION**

It has been seen that all aspects of wellbeing do indeed play a role in determining the kind of relationships people have. Taking proper wholesome care of wellbeing will positively affect relationships. Neglecting certain aspects of wellbeing puts a certain level of strain on relationships. It should not just be physical well being that is cultivated but the economic, social, emotional, and psychological wellbeing as well. It will require help from the society around as well as the partners engaged in the forged relationships. In order to reap the best from life and have fulfilling lives it is therefore imperative to holistically take care of wellbeing and the relationships will flourish in tandem.

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