

Mental health: scientific production versus action plans

Janet Mercedes Arévalo-Ipanaque^{1,2} 

Mental health is a topic of interest that has regained relevance worldwide. A review concluded that the pandemic generated high levels of work-related stress, affecting mental health, especially among healthcare workers (1).

Studies have shown consequences such as anxiety, depression, stress, and social isolation, particularly among the most vulnerable populations, including children, individuals with preexisting mental illnesses, adults, and young people with limited coping strategies, those with a history of living in adverse economic, social or health conditions, older adults and healthcare personnel (2).

A study that monitored the mental health of foreign young adults studying in China found significant differences ($p = 0.000$) between mental health before and after the pandemic, with significant reductions (from $M = 51.41$ to $M = 33.21$). Apart from that, increased differences in depression and anxiety were also observed (3).

Mental health problems can affect physical health, quality of life, cognitive performance and immune status. All these factors contribute to the development of other diseases and even mortality (4).

There are also studies that propose action measures and intervention strategies to restore and preserve mental health. A review indicates that the combination of organizational measures and individual interventions has proven to be the most effective solution for preventing psychosocial risks in the workplace. Additionally, measures to improve mental well-being are recommended, such as clear communication, access to adequate personal protection, sufficient rest, practical support, and psychological support (1).

Systematic reviews—some with meta-analyses—have even documented the effectiveness of gamification in improving mental well-being and reducing anxiety and symptoms of depression (5).

Other studies have demonstrated greater effectiveness of human digital mental health interventions that include human support, compared to those without such support, especially for individuals with more severe symptoms (6).

A study conducted with healthcare personnel in Germany identified work-related needs expressed by the workers themselves to promote mental health in their professional environment. These needs included better working conditions, better communication, increased staffing, schedule planning, flatter organizational

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Corresponding author:

Janet Mercedes Arévalo-Ipanaque
E-mail: janet.arevalo@upch.pe



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¹ Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia. Lima, Peru.

² Peruvian Scientific Association of Nurse Researchers and Inventors (ACIPEIN). Lima, Peru.

structures, prompt attention to their concerns, inclusion in decision-making, an open approach to culture, teamwork spirit, and mutual appreciation (7).

However, some questions remain: Are governments and institutions taking this evidence into account to implement the recommendations? What actions are being taken in the light of these scientific contributions? Are the institutions that are adopting measures monitoring the achievement of their goals?

A documented case revealed that institutional mental health support groups have not been well received. Workers identified a lack of information, lack of cohesion, high workload, and lack of motivation as factors that diminish interest in participating in activities aimed at addressing their mental health, such as support groups. Besides, some employees feared potential negative consequences of seeking psychological support services in their workplace. At the same time, the lack of anonymity and stigma were significant barriers (7).

The purpose of science is to improve the quality of life and contribute to well-being by solving the problems that surround us. When this does not happen, there is a need to identify the reasons why scientifically grounded proposals are not implemented or why the desired outcomes are not achieved. Perhaps it is due to a lack of interest or culture in mental health care. Is it that we are not aware of the magnitude of the problem until we experience it firsthand with our dearest loved ones? If this situation persists, our duty is to continue researching this issue, not only to show the magnitude of the problem, but to continue generating and implementing alternative solutions while monitoring their effectiveness.

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