The intersection between culture, mental health, and criminality

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Abstract

Culture influences mental health concepts, expressions, and understanding, hence impacting the criminal justice system. Cultural frameworks influence self-perception, perceptions of others, and worldview, hence impacting emotions and problem-solving abilities. Cultural concepts influence relationships and convictions. It obstructs theoretical and empirical validation. Culture influences mental health and criminal behaviour. Cultural factors influence mental health and therapeutic concepts. Cultural attitudes influence views of mental illness, treatment rates, and the use of mental health care. Comprehending the impact of cultural influences, mental health, and criminal behaviour on mental health and the criminal justice system is essential.

Collectivism and individualism influence mental health support. Social conventions promote collaboration, leading individuals to conceal their mental health challenges to evade stigma. This may deter individuals from disclosing mental health issues and postpone treatment, exacerbating symptoms and increasing the likelihood of criminal behaviour. Communities centred on individuality may promote self-expression and autonomy, facilitating the early identification and treatment of mental health disorders. It may promote antisocial behaviour. Theories of mental disease rooted in cultural contexts are significant. Certain cultures attribute mental disease to supernatural, spiritual, or moral factors instead of biological or psychological origins. Convictions influence treatment anticipations. Some individuals consult traditional or spiritual healers rather than mental health professionals, hindering therapeutic progress. The DSM-5 may not be globally relevant due to cultural variations in mental health illnesses.

The DSM-5's cultural formulation interview assesses cultural identification, disease perception, and psychosocial stress to examine the influence of cultural variety on mental health. Cultural insensitivity may result in inaccurate diagnoses, treatments, and results for diverse patients. Cultural concepts are associated with mental health and criminal conduct; thus, culturally competent mental health therapy must align with community needs and values. Cultural humility necessitates that mental health providers acknowledge and comprehend client biases.

Introduction

Cultural factors shape individuals' perceptions and discussions on mental health disorders, their coping mechanisms, their methods of seeking care, and the efficacy of therapy and prevention strategies (Kirmayer & Jarvis, 2019). The norms, values, and beliefs of a culture influence perceptions of mental illness. This affects individuals' perceptions of it as a medical, spiritual, or social issue (Karthick, 2017; Sam & Moreira, 2012). These beliefs influence the frequency with which individuals seek assistance, the types of treatment they like, and the efficacy with which they adhere to treatment suggestions (Gopalkrishnan, 2018; Murray, 2015). Cultural beliefs can either foster or hinder mental health stigma, thereby deterring individuals from getting help (Snowden & Yamada, 2004). Intricate connections exist among culture, mental health, and criminality. Cultural concepts shape perceptions and management of mental health concerns, perhaps resulting in criminal behaviour.

Diverse cultures and belief systems conceptualise health variably, potentially influencing mental health (Srivastava et al., 2025). Collectivism and individualism, familial roles, spirituality, and conventional therapy all influence mental health (Alqasir & Ohtsuka, 2023). These traits influence individuals' perceptions, understanding, and management of mental health concerns; therefore, they must be taken into account when designing and executing mental health interventions (Hwang, 2016). Cultural norms influence the manifestation of psychological distress. Certain cultures prioritise emotional restraint, whereas others emphasise transparency (Snowden & Yamada, 2004). Cultural perspectives on the mind-body interplay influence how individuals discuss mental health difficulties (Gopalkrishnan, 2018). Culture influences the simplicity and acceptance of mental health treatments, hence impacting individuals' approaches to therapy and the appropriateness of various therapies (Snowden & Yamada, 2004).

Perspectives on Mental Health Across Cultures

Cultural beliefs influence mental health by determining perceptions of mental illness—whether as a medical problem, spiritual matter, or societal concern—and by guiding help-seeking behaviours and treatment choices (Leong & Kalibatseva, 2011). Individuals with mental health stigma are less inclined to pursue professional assistance and more prone to rely on familial support or conventional healing practices (Adebayo et al., 2024). Nevertheless, communities that promote mental health treatment exhibit higher rates of diagnosis and intervention (Sherrick, 2016). Certain cultures favour spiritual or traditional treatment above Western medicine (Bieler et al., 2020). Cultural perceptions

determine the appropriateness of various therapies. Cultural views about the causes of disease can affect medical treatment choices (Ao, 2019). Cultural variables shape perceptions of mental illnesses, hence affecting community comprehension (Alqasir & Ohtsuka, 2023). Mental health practitioners must acknowledge these cultural disparities to deliver culturally competent care. Spirituality can aid individuals in overcoming mental disease and enhancing their mental health through psycho-spiritual interventions (Srivastava et al., 2025). Certain languages lack terminology for sadness or depression, perhaps leading to underreporting and misinterpretation (Whiteford et al., 2015).

Mental health practitioners must acknowledge that many cultures and religions perceive mental health in distinct ways. They should also customise their interventions to meet individual needs and promote spirituality (Srivastava et al., 2025). Cultural competency necessitates an understanding of the influence of cultural ideas, attitudes, and practices on mental health, as well as an awareness of one's own cultural prejudices. Incorporating cultural understanding into treatment strategies can enhance engagement, goal attainment, and outcomes. This necessitates the adaptation of therapies to the patient's cultural context, the incorporation of traditional healing practices, and engagement with community leaders and healers. As the Western world becomes progressively diverse, therapists must comprehend their patients' cultural backgrounds to formulate appropriate treatment plans (Jacobs et al., 2015). Cultural influences on therapeutic relationships indicate that cultural revitalisation, community support, and familial structures can enhance mental health treatments. Therapists must take into account both their own and their clients' cultural contexts (Gopalkrishnan, 2018).

Criminal Behaviour and Mental Illness

The correlation between mental health and criminal behaviour is intricate. Individuals who are impoverished, substance-dependent, or lacking mental health treatment exhibit a higher propensity for criminal behaviour. Mental illness can hinder cognition and emotion, resulting in impulsive behaviour and erroneous decisions, hence elevating the likelihood of criminal activity. Unaddressed mental health conditions can exacerbate conduct and result in criminal activity. The majority of individuals with mental health disorders are neither aggressive nor criminal. Timely identification and intervention for mental health issues can avert criminal behaviour. Psychiatrists, social workers, and patient advocates must collaborate to identify the reasons of criminal behaviour (Ghiasi et al., 2019).

The Effects of Stigma

Social and self-stigma impede individuals with mental health disorders from accessing therapy. Mental health patients are often stigmatised, resulting in social marginalisation, diminished opportunities, and reduced self-esteem (Hinshaw & Stier, 2008). Self-stigma occurs when one internalises negative perceptions about oneself, resulting in feelings of humiliation, depression, and a diminished willingness to pursue treatment. The belief that mental health disorders are perilous or unforeseen exacerbates the situation. Stigma in healthcare diminishes quality and obstructs communication between patients and staff (Ahad et al., 2023). At the individual, communal, and social levels, there is a necessity for education, advocacy, and initiatives that foster understanding and compassion among individuals to combat stigma. Mental health stigma inhibits individuals from addressing symptoms (Lucas et al., 2017). Stigma encompasses labelling, segregation, stereotype recognition, assistance, bias, and discrimination. Power—whether social, economic, or political—intensifies these challenges (Clément et al., 2014).

Cognitive and spiritual well-being

Spirituality can offer solace, significance, and connection to those with mental health conditions (Srivastava et al., 2025). Spirituality, encompassing individual ideas and experiences associated with the sacred or transcendent, can offer individuals hope, purpose, and methods for addressing challenges. Spirituality can provide a sense of purpose for people with critical illnesses (Srivastava et al., 2025). Spirituality can facilitate connections among individuals within religious communities (Srivastava et al., 2025). Spirituality in mental health care can enhance well-being and alleviate the burden of mental disease (Srivastava et al., 2025). Spirituality in mental health care might offer advantages, although it also raises issues. Healthcare staff must comprehend patients' religious practices (Srivastava et al., 2025).

Taking into account diverse cultures in the treatment of mental illness

Healthcare professionals must honour patients' cultural beliefs, attitudes, and customs to deliver culturally sensitive mental health care. They must also acknowledge that culture influences mental health experiences and dialogues. Culturally sensitive care entails modifying treatment to align with patients' cultural backgrounds, including traditional healing practices, and utilising community resources to enhance outcomes. Cultural competence training equips mental health practitioners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to engage with varied clients. The patient's faith, family, and beliefs should be taken into account. Health promotion, cultural competence training, and interpretation services that incorporate cultural values enhance healthcare outcomes (Swihart et al., 2019).

Intersection

Cultural ideas, mental health, and criminal behaviour are interrelated. Cultural notions shape perceptions and behaviours around mental health, perhaps resulting in criminal conduct. Cultural stigma hinders individuals from seeking mental health therapy, exacerbating their challenges and elevating their likelihood of engaging in criminal behaviour (Leong & Kalibatseva, 2011). Cultural variables influence the perception and response to mental illness, potentially altering mental health outcomes and behaviours (Tonsing, 2017). Mental health care must exhibit cultural competence to effectively serve diverse communities. Mental health practitioners must account for cultural differences to deliver effective and compassionate care (Wang, 2015). Deconstructing cultural barriers to mental health care, enhancing knowledge, and utilising culturally appropriate therapy can mitigate stigma and enhance outcomes. Spiritual resources in mental health therapy may more effectively meet patient demands than medical treatments (Srivastava et al., 2025). Healthcare providers must comprehend various spiritual traditions to assist patients in integrating spirituality into therapy (Srivastava et al., 2025). Subpar mental health does not necessarily indicate the presence of a psychiatric condition, nor is a diagnosis requisite for enhancement (Crum, 2021). Daily living techniques and interventions ought to be accessible to all individuals (Crum, 2021).

The justice system must offer culturally appropriate mental health therapies to address crime-related psychological difficulties. Mental health interventions must be tailored to the local culture (Owusu et al., 2022). This involves delivering care in several languages, employing conventional therapy, and acknowledging cultural perceptions of mental illness (Qureshi & Collazos, 2011). Culturally attuned services can assist varied individuals in accessing, utilising, and enhancing their health (Kirmayer & Jarvis, 2019). Stigma impacts individuals with mental health conditions, their families, healthcare professionals, and society at large. Comprehensive strategies are essential to address biases and foster understanding (Ahad et al., 2023). Deliver superior care, elevate awareness, and advance research to mitigate stigma. Bieler et al. (2020); Feldman (2020)

Criminality and cultural convictions

Culture shapes criminal behaviour, the nature of offences, and responses to crime. Certain cultures condone honour killings and various forms of violence, whereas others favour theft and other nonviolent offences influenced by social and economic motives. Certain communities refrain from reporting crimes due to a lack of trust in police or fear of retaliation. Culture influences criminal policy.

Certain civilisations employ restorative justice as a kind of punishment.

Comprehending their culture is essential to prevent crime and assist offenders with respect. Cultural views can influence individuals' perceptions of the criminal justice system, especially its fairness and their trust in law enforcement and the judiciary. Culturally proficient approaches are essential to address these challenges and guarantee equitable criminal justice for all. Criminal behaviour is influenced by various psychological, social, and cultural factors. Conduct and antisocial personality disorders elevate the propensity for violence (Gun Violence: Prediction, Prevention, and Policy, 2013).

According to various studies (Varshney et al., 2015), issues with planning, disorganisation, impulsivity, and reality evaluation increase the likelihood of mental illness patients being victims of violence. Substance abuse, trauma, and socioeconomic deprivation are the principal risk factors connecting mental illness and violence (Varshney et al., 2015; McGinty, 2018). Violence can result in the loss of personal freedom, elevated clinical and risk assessment costs; stigma associated with mental illness, and disrupted care (Desmarais et al., 2014). Addressing these disparities with culturally attuned norms and practices is essential.

Cultural criminology highlights cultural dimensions in the examination of crime through multiple lenses, including victimisation, collective behaviours, and social concerns (Hayward & Young, 2004). Cultural criminologists examine the methods by which criminal subcultures attract members through common experiences, clothing, and vernacular. They also analyse the authority of courts and prisons (Hayward & Young, 2004). Acculturation may elevate adolescent violence; however ethnic identification and bicultural self-efficacy may offer protection (Soriano et al., 2004). Cultural criminology investigates the influence of culture and media on crime and societal responses to it (Ferrell, 1999). Cross-cultural cognition is essential in the criminal justice system to guarantee that concepts and procedures are effective across diverse cultures (Birkbeck, 1993).

Media and many elements facilitate certain criminal activities (Sacco, 1995; "CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE," 2023). Foundational psychological theories such as sociobiology, intelligence, learning, cognition, and personality assist criminologists in understanding antisocial and criminal behaviour (Henderson, 2017). Early psychological theories assist criminologists in understanding antisocial or delinquent behaviour and media influences that encourage specific types of crime.

Intersectionality and cooperative methodologies

Addressing the interplay between cultural concepts, mental health, and criminal behaviour necessitates a comprehensive and intersectional approach (Díaz-Faes & Pereda, 2020). Cultural attitudes influence perceptions of mental illness and the adherence to therapeutic interventions. Mental health practitioners must comprehend this. Culturally sensitive mental health services mitigate stigma and facilitate access to care for individuals facing challenges in obtaining it. Criminal justice initiatives must incorporate mental health care to tackle the underlying causes of criminal behaviour and facilitate rehabilitation. Mental health professionals, social workers, and community leaders must cooperate to develop comprehensive crime prevention strategies that yield successful outcomes.

Interventions must target individual, societal, and systemic issues contributing to engagement with the criminal justice system. The criminal justice and mental health sectors must collaborate (Barrenger & Canada, 2014). To formulate efficient criminal justice solutions, it is essential to comprehend the social, political, and economic aspects of your community (Leverentz, 2020). Re-entry programs exist within broader socioeconomic contexts. Cultural criminology has transformed our perceptions of crime and justice (Leonard & Kenny, 2010; Presdee, 2004). Cultural awareness promotes equitable treatment within the criminal justice system. Comprehending cultural ideas and customising therapies for varied populations is essential (Battams et al., 2021; Strauss-Hughes et al., 2019).

Discussion

The application of several criminological ideas enhances our comprehension of crime and delinquency (Bernard & Snipes, 1996). To comprehend crime and identify holistic solutions, insights from several sectors are essential. Criminology includes philosophy, law, sociology, psychology, and politics (2011). Mental health courts seek to facilitate therapy for individuals with mental illness and reduce recidivism (Rice & Harris, 1992). Mental health courts and alternative diversion programs redirect individuals with mental illness from the criminal justice system to treatment. These programs must be culturally attuned to effectively serve various populations. Tackling mental health concerns prior to involvement in the juvenile justice system may diminish recidivism and enhance personal, societal, and economic outcomes (Kutcher & McDougall, 2009). Restorative justice engages victims and communities in rehabilitation to facilitate healing and diminish recidivism (Ryals, 2004).

Positive criminology highlights affirmative experiences as a means to prevent criminal behaviour (Ronel & Elisha, 2010). The reintegration of asylum seekers can be advantageous for ex-offenders (Kirkwood & McNeill, 2015). The criminal justice

system continually evolves in its rehabilitation methods and efforts to diminish recidivism (Toole, 2015). Criminology investigates the social, cultural, political, and economic factors that affect law (Dubber & Hörnle, 2014). Examining the interplay among cultural ideas, mental health, and criminality comprehensively can provide more equitable and just societal outcomes.

Religious programs reduce crime and facilitate rehabilitation for offenders (Johnson, 2021). Spiritual viewpoints on criminology can alter our comprehension of crime and rehabilitation (Ronel & Yair, 2017).

Conclusion

In summary, effective initiatives that prevent incarceration enhance public safety, reduce costs, and safeguard the futures of youth (Spinney et al., 2018). Diversion programs, particularly for medium- to high-risk juveniles, are more efficacious than juvenile justice systems in preventing delinquency (Wilson & Hoge, 2012). Wilson and Hoge (2012) determined that diversion is more effective than court processes in deterring crime. Juvenile delinquents obtain expert rehabilitation and assistance through these programs. They examine the underlying reasons of behaviour (Kretschmar et al., 2018). Community diversion programs for at-risk, non-serious offenders are more economically efficient than criminal justice programs (Dembo et al., 2005). Contemporary diversion programs seek to minimise case processing expenses and expunge criminal records (Johnson et al., 2019). Diversion programs must to be used throughout the criminal justice system to achieve optimal efficacy (Lange et al., 2011). Diversion programs are effective solely upon completion. Individuals who do not complete their probation are more prone to reoffend compared to standard probationers (Wilson & Hoge, 2013). Diversion programs are a valid alternative to justice agency services, according to providers and clients (Osgood & Weichselbaum, 1984). To optimise diversion strategies, they must be effectively executed and finalised (Schlesinger, 2018). Certain research indicates that diversion programs do not inherently decrease recidivism, although they do diminish incarceration duration (Gill & Murphy, 2017).

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