

ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIZENSHIP THROUGH EDUCATIONAL IMPERATIVES IN ALIGNMENT WITH OMAN VISION 2040

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Abstract

Mental health literacy is increasingly acknowledged as a strategic facilitator of sustainable citizenship, especially when examined through the lens of national development such as Oman Vision 2040. This article takes a critical approach that examines the nexus of mental health literacy, educational change, and civic engagement in the rapidly shifting socio-educational climate of Oman. Drawing from local policy efforts, processes of institutions, and community-based strategies, this paper will examine how mental health literacy supports the development of citizens who are emotionally resilient, socially engaged, and ethically responsible. Supporting and putting into practice educational priorities under Oman Vision 2040 such as human capital development, inclusive education and societal well-being as key drivers of national development, reinforces that mental health literacy should not merely be considered a public health issue to be addressed, but rather a civic responsibility that adds to individuals capacity to practice self-regulating, empathetic and engaged citizenship. We will assess the current commitment of the Ministry of Education, higher education institutions, and civil society actors to engage in practices that embed mental health competencies in teaching and learning, programming and youth development frameworks. The barriers of stigma, access to services, and policy coherence across educational settings, remains a challenge to positively impact mental health literacy. By thinking about mental health literacy as inherently connected with the broader concerns of sustainable citizenship, this article offers a framework for education priorities that are aligned with developing long-term vision in Oman.

Keywords: Mental health literacy, sustainable citizenship, Oman Vision 2040, education reform,

Introduction

The Oman Vision 2040 report provides a broad-based and future-oriented approach to national transformation, which encompasses economic diversification, social inclusion, institutional innovation, and environmental sustainability. The primary focus of the Vision is on human capital development - individuals who are empowered to be productive and employable as well as emotionally adaptive, ethical, and socially responsible. The Vision prioritizes inclusive education, lifelong learning, and well-being as the foundational components of progress because there is an understanding that a well-educated and healthy society serves as the bedrock of national development.

In this context, mental health literacy has emerged as a vital but underdeveloped aspect of the national educational endeavor and social fabric of Oman. Mental health literacy can be defined as the ability to understand, manage, and seek assistance for mental health difficulties; it includes both knowledge and attitudes that inform personal understanding and behavior in the

realm of psychological difficulties. Mental health literacy extends beyond clinical awareness but also incorporates aspects of emotional regulation, stress management, empathy, and engaging with community life.

As Oman continues towards rapid modernization, digitalization, and either a demographic of youth or an increasing population that is youth-dominated populations in conjunction with increasing urbanization, and their exposure to globalised media, it becomes even more important for its citizens to be psychologically resilient. The stresses that education, career, social expectations, and instant connectivity put on the population requires an ever-increasing push for mental health awareness.

Mental health literacy is a vital component of both personal well-being and sustainable citizenship—above and beyond residency or participation in political processes. Sustainable citizenship also implies ethical behavior, emotional intelligence, and civic responsibility. Biopsychosocially healthy citizens are more inclined to engage positively in community life, peacefully resolve differences, hold to commonly held virtues, and contribute to dignified and quality of life at a sustainable community level. Therefore, mental health literacy is both a personal capacity and a public good.

This article examines considerations for carefully embedding mental health literacy in Oman's educational system to sustain the trajectory of the Vision 2040. It talk about mental health literacy as not just something additional, but instead think of it as a fundamental educational priority—one priority among many that could help prepare students for academic success and meaningful lives in an ever-evolving environmentally rich world.

Current Landscape of Mental Health in Oman

Oman has considerably advanced its efforts to tackle mental health issues through government initiatives, reforms in the educational sector, and the involvement of the civil society over the last few years. The Ministry of Health took a leading role in this regard by setting up various digital platforms aimed at delivering Nafs services to the public, including support standards, guidance, and referrals. The aim of these platforms is to enhance the availability and recognition of mental health resources, especially amongst educators and youth. Also, the Ministry has broadened mental health care provision in primary care settings to ensure that psychological support is available in urban and rural clinics alike. Besides this, community-based programs are launched to spread the concept of mental health among different age groups and social classes.

The educational sector has reacted with reforms to incorporate mental health support in schools and universities. The Ministry of Education has implemented school-based counseling services in some governorates where students can get guidance and emotional support from the professionals. Teacher training programs are also provided to teachers who will then be able to spot students' emotional requirements and respond accordingly thus creating a more supportive and understanding environment in schools. Besides, the Life skills program now also covers emotional regulation, pressure management, and empathy for others - all areas that are part of the socio-emotional learning curriculum and are getting more attention these days.

Moreover, institutions of higher learning are not left behind in advocating for mental health literacy as part of the student development approach. The Sultan Qaboos University is equipped with wellness centers that provide counseling, support groups, and workshops as well as peer support programs. Faculty-led research projects examining youth mental health, trauma, and

resilience, which is the major source of evidence-driven practices, is one of their contributions. Together with ONGs, the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) has introduced peer mentoring schemes and mental health literacy drives - a collaboration that has led to easy access and acceptance of both topics in public discussions.

The change in public perception about mental health issues that has been brought about by the youth and civil society-led movements is indeed very impressive. What were previously unheard of campaigns on social media are now effectively reaching young people and turning them into users of promising services which in turn breaks stereotypes and leads the youth to asking for help. The initiatives of advocacy in schools and universities have paved the way for open conversations about mental health, while partnerships with international organizations such as WHO and UNICEF have provided local programs with global know-how and resources. The aggregate of these endeavors is evidence of a growing societal pledge to regard mental health as not only a public concern but also a civic priority.

Educational Imperatives for Mental Health Literacy

Embedding mental health knowledge as part of the school curriculum in the educational institutions of Oman requires a systematic and holistic culturally-based approach. It is imperative that the curriculum integration would be grounded at the very basics of education and that mental health topics would be inherent at every stage of schooling. Primary and secondary schools should have life skills programs that teach emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal communication. These topics are the foundation for the students' psychological growth and for the circular classrooms training eco-systems. College education should, therefore, be inclusive of mental health-related issues in teacher education, healthcare education, and civic studies to name a few areas of future professional support and well-being. The VET and adult learning programs should be equally aware of the importance of stress coping skills and mental health in the workplace to address the diverse needs of the learners across the lifespan.

Facilities which offer education need support of very similar kind if they want to keep up with this challenge. There should be well-trained counselors in every school and university, ready to offer in all respects confidential and culturally thoughtful assistance. We envisage that these people should not be isolated entities but part of the educational ecosystem, and should have contact with the teaching staff, management, and parentward. Apart from the counselors, educational establishments can also invite persons to come together in their wellness centers, or student clubs, or even peer support groups, to talk about experiences and look for solutions without being judged. Referral systems to external service providers such as hospitals and digital platforms need to be very efficient so that the care will be timely and of good quality.

The level of involvement of community members can be considered as the third pillar of educational requirements. Schools and colleges can thus become mentally healthier through intimacy and co-operation with the families, the clergy, and the local organizations which can extend the learning of the mental health beyond the school walls. Some strategies to create awareness are, by far, holding events, facilitating conversations among generations, integrating traditional principles of love and respect, that help in overcoming culture differences which in turn facilitate building a community which understands that mental well-being is of great importance. Invitation and inclusion of the broader community in the mutual whole create a support system not only for mental health but also as general social care which ought to be

shared responsibility. The educational institutions can do so by reaching out to the outer community.

When put together, these demands pave the way for a statewide plan that accords with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 in terms of mental health literacy. They perceive education as a tool not just for the academic success of the learner, but also for nurturing the whole person emotionally, socially, and ethically. Through mental health awareness campaigns in the education system, the Sultanate of Oman is able to do so and hence equips itself with the right kind of human capital needed for a sustainable future, one student after another, who is mentally well, mature, and who will be able to make viable contributions for a future that is sustainable and beneficial for all.

Case Studies and Best Practices

Oman's move to integrate mental health literacy into the education and civic sectors through a network of institutional initiatives has been characterized by innovation and sensitivity to new societal demands. These case studies show that universities and government bodies are not only preparing the ground for mental health awareness but also for the democratic participation of the people.

At Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), mental health help has changed from a few isolated counseling services to a more comprehensive wellness system. The university has created a fully-equipped student mental health center which provides individual counseling, group psychotherapy, and psychoeducational workshops. All of these services are aimed not only at treating psychological problems that may arise suddenly but also at enabling students to take preventive measures and manage their feelings by themselves. Besides this, faculty members at SQU have been actively involved in the national conversation through their research on youth mental health, trauma recovery, and building resilience. Their work has been the source that informs the creation of new curricula and policy changes especially in teacher education and medical training programs. To date, mental health issues have become a part of the syllabi of various academic fields, which is an indication of the transdisciplinary approach to psychological well-being.

It is the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) that, spread across different locations in Oman, has taken up not one but several coordinated strategies for enhancing mental health literacy. Student peer mentoring programs have been initiated to enable pupils to take up the role of mental health ambassadors and thus spread the culture of empathy and mutual support. Such efforts are further supported by the institution-wide campaigns that count on the use of digital media, student clubs, and open-air events for the purpose of informing the public and fighting against stigmatization. UTAS has also entered into a partnership with local and international NGOs which facilitates providing instruction, creating culturally relevant content, and expanding the outreach to the deprived groups. Such a collaborative framework is a way of showing how institutional and civil society agents can be jointly responsible for the creation of viable mental health ecosystems.

The Ministry of Education has taken measures to integrate mental health literacy into the national school system. The introduction of counseling services in selected schools through pilot programs particularly in urban areas where the student population is diverse and is on the rise is noteworthy. The Ministry, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), has also executed a series of awareness campaigns targeting students, parents, and educators.

The campaigns underline the significance of early intervention, open dialogue, and community-based support as they are in line with the global standards for school mental health promotion. As a whole, these cases point to a trend of institutional innovations, collaboration across different sectors, and a rising interest of the public in these matters. Although these efforts are still at a nascent phase, they bring forth the potential of extendable models of mental health literacy that take into account cultural and local factors.

Barriers to Implementation

Oman's strategy for spreading mental health awareness by means of education and the civic defines sectors through a network of institutional initiatives has been cited for its recognition of new social demands and innovation. The case study discloses that universities and government agencies are not only the pioneers of mental health awareness but also that of people's democratic participation.

Mental health at SQU is referred to as a totally different situation, as the university has transformed from a few isolated counseling services to a complete wellness system. The university mental health care center is well-prepared to offer individual counseling, group psychotherapy, and psychoeducational workshops for students. It should be noted that the interventions are only the initial steps as they are designed not only for the healing of the psychological disorders that might arise but also for the provision of the necessary tools to the students that will empower them to take preventive steps themselves and simultaneously manage their emotions independently. Apart from this, faculty members at Sultan Qaboos University have been actively involved in the national discussion by conducting research on youth mental health, trauma recovery, and resilience-building. Their research has become the foundation of the changes in curriculum and policy, teacher education, and medical training programs. At present, mental health issues are among the topics that are being taught in various academic fields and thus, are the transdisciplinary approach to psychological well-being.

Moreover, the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, various campuses in Oman, has gone beyond the implementation of a single strategy and has coordinated multiple strategies in the area of mental health education. They have initiated student mentoring programs with the goal of students becoming the mental health ambassadors thus, the culture of empathy and mutual support is spreading. The means of implementing these programs more widely are organization-wide campaigns. They also use digital media, student clubs, and open-air events to inform people about the programs as well as stigmatization reduction. On the contrary, the partnership of UTAS with local and international NGOs has not only made instruction easy but also has facilitated the creation of culturally relevant content and extended the outreach to the deprived groups. These collaborative frameworks are the ways of showing how institutional and civil society agents can support the creation of viable mental health ecosystems together.

The Ministry of Education has taken many steps to include mental health literacy in the national school system. One of the major efforts made is the launching of counseling services in the form of pilot programs in a few schools, mostly in urban areas with a diverse and growing student population. The main focus here is on teacher support programs that are the heart of these services and thus, teacher's emotional intelligence, classroom empathy, and trauma-informed pedagogy are the main points that teachers are trained on.

Recommendations

To address the barriers revealed in the research and promote mental health literacy as the focus of national attention, several strategic recommendations have been put forward. These recommendations are based on qualitative institutional experiences, stakeholder consultation results, and worldwide mental health promotion models.

It is foremost and most pressing to recommend a unifying nationwide plan linking mental health literacy with education, civic development, and public health. Such a plan should set out the goals, indicators, and routes for implementation in order to guarantee that mental health is seen as a comprehensive issue under Oman Vision 2040. Besides, it has to be co-created by stakeholders across various sectors e.g., government ministries, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and youth representatives. A framework of such extent would deliver coherence, accountability, and strategic direction towards the upcoming projects.

Inter-sector collaboration should be a must feature in daily life and thus be ensured by formalized mechanisms like inter-ministerial committees, joint funding schemes, and shared data platforms. These parliamentary bodies would facilitate coordination, eliminate grass-roots work duplication and allow integrated service delivery. In consequence, schools would be able to work directly with community health centers to deliver the onsite counseling services while universities would establish a link with NGOs for the development of culturally addressed training material.

Firmly backed finance is the most necessary element, on the one hand, to keep the mental health literacy schemes going and, on the other hand, to widen their scope. Investments should initially target building the capacity, developing the infrastructure, and the community outreach. Among the activities are training educators and counselors, creating wellness centers and supporting youth-led initiatives. The financing models ought to be welcoming and pliant so as to allow for the phenomena and adaptation of the local contexts.

To begin with, a national research agenda focusing on mental health literacy should be in place so as to produce data, evaluate programs and guide policy. Qualitative studies can delve into people's experiences, cultural views, and changes in the organization while participatory research can extensively involve communities in co-designing solutions. Universities and research centers will therefore need support if they are to take lead, and collaborate with worldwide partners and funding agencies.

Combined, these recommendations map out ways to integrate mental health literacy into Oman educational and civic systems. They represent the commitment to holistic development, inclusive governance, and sustainable citizenship—the fundamental principles of Oman Vision 2040.

Findings

This assessment uncovers a collective and organizational recognition of mental health MHL (Mental Health Literacy) as one of the main enablers of sustainable citizenship in the Sultanate of Oman. Ministries and public sector, educational institute, and non-governmental organizations' sectors, as a whole, also identify a movement of structured concepts, projects, and the engagement of partners that is aimed at the embracement of the MHL in the public arena and education practice.

To begin with, mental health literacy is in a quite good degree with the People and Society pillar of Oman Vision 2040, mainly in the aspects of health, identity, and the inclusive

education. The Vision's giving priority of the youth empowerment, life-long learning, and civic engagement is a clear call for the deepening mental health competences in the national strategies of development.

Moreover, the Nafs platform and mental health services in the primary healthcare extend by the government through digital innovation and accessibility have been an essential part of the demonstration of a commitment. Besides, the ministry of education reforms like school-based counseling and teacher training complete these efforts and show the move towards preventive and student-centered approaches.

Moreover, among others Sultan Qaboos University and UTAS are on the way to passing the mental health literacy through the wellness centers, peer support networks, and curriculum integration into the institution. This approach indicates the rise of the acknowledgment of the university's role in producing the emotionally resilient and socially responsible graduates.

In addition to that, the civil society, especially the youth-led movements and NGOs, have been instrumental in breaking down the stigmas associated with mental illnesses and encouraging individuals to seek help. The kind of aggressively they applied social media, community activities, and cooperation with international organizations have made the diffusion and acceptability of mental health campaigns easy and broad.

On the other hand, the review concedes that these same issues - cultural stigma, lack of resources, scattered policy, and limited data - continue to be barriers. These obstacles are the main reasons why it is difficult to take mental health literacy programs to a higher level and maintain them over time, thus, a call for systemic reform is made.

Conclusion

Understanding of mental health is no more an issue on the side lines - rather, it is a core element of Oman's educational and developmental future. The integration of mental health awareness into the educational imperatives is a transformative way to realize the nation's aspiration of Vision 2040 and, thereby, shape the future of Oman with resilient, reflective, and responsible citizens. The Vision's focus on human capital, inclusive education, and continuous well-being makes it clear that the psychological resilience and emotional intelligence should be the core of the national development agenda.

The findings from this report reveal that a number of initiatives to improve the situation have been already taken, for example, counseling in schools, digital platforms, wellness centers in the universities, and youth-led advocacy. However, the need for a more coordinated and strategic approach to institutionally mental health literacy at the different sectors' levels is still very urgent. The incorporation of mental health literacy into educational outcomes, civic engagement, and public health priorities through a national framework is part of this inter-sectoral collaboration. This framework must be representative, culturally based, and designed in cooperation with education, health, civil society, and youth community stakeholders. It should outline the objectives, execution, and monitoring while also providing sustainability and efficacy.

Besides that, capacity building remains a vital issue to consider. The necessary training, skills, and instruments to implement mental health education in even the most diverse school settings should be given to teachers, school counselors, and community leaders. This, in turn, calls for continued professional training, the availability of culturally appropriate material, and institutional encouragement for new ideas. Besides, health education in schools needs

extension and adjustment so as to not only mirror the cultural, religious, and social aspects of Oman but also merge them with contemporary approaches to mental health by introducing ideas like compassion, dignity, and collective care that can help close the gap between traditional beliefs and current practices.

Quality research is a must if policy and practice are to be well informed. The qualitative pieces probing real-life experiences, cultural appropriations, and institutional factors, can throw the light on mental health literacy's barriers and facilitators. Participatory research with students, teachers, and parents as contributors can help engagement and pertinence.

Improving mental health literacy in Oman, in the end, goes beyond just dealing with the psychological challenges—it is about giving the power to individuals to live meaningful lives, to be of help to their communities, and to create a future that is not only resilient but also compassionate. It's essentially about developing a national ethos where mental well-being is seen as a necessity, is supported, and is celebrated as one of the main pillars of personal fulfillment and collective progress. As Oman continues towards its Vision 2040, mental health literacy should not be viewed as a mere optional extra that can be added if there is time but rather as a strategic imperative that is necessary for a healthier, more inclusive, and more hopeful society to be built.

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