Analyzing Influences Of Personality Traits On Patient Behaviors And Its' Effects On Trust Establishment In Healthcare

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I. INTRODUCTION:

"We are living in the age of high information and communication technology with long-standing problems of improving human health in healthcare systems" [Bashshur and Shannon, 2009]

There have been several studies that looked at the link between personality traits and mental health, but this report focuses on a particular study that was done during the pandemic by various psychologists around the world such as Godze Ikizer, Kowal Marta and others.

These findings were published in the digital database PubMed Central, a free archive of biomedical and life science journal literature at the US National institutes of Health National Library of Medicine. A remarkable factor that was observed in this study associated with stress and loneliness doing the pandemic, was individuals' diverse personality traits and one of the keys for classifying and operationalizing personality traits was the 5 factor model (also known as The Big 5)

This model describes personality as a system with Neuroticism, Extroversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. This five-dimensional structure model was found to show high replicability across all the major regions of the world. An interpretation which could mean that when faced with adverse situations such as loss of health and well-being, patients across the world with similar personality traits display similar behavioral patterns despite their diverse cultures and backgrounds. This is because there is no color associated with human emotions of fear, anxiety, rage, elation, apprehension etc.

The researchers found that personality is one of the factors which may explain individual differences in behavior in response to challenging situations.

This study's aim was to understand to what degree of variance, personality traits affect pandemic related stress and loneliness. Data was gathered during the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic in a three-month period from March 30, 2020 to May 30, 2020. Project received a waiver to proceed from Aarhus university board of research ethics office. All data was anonymous.

Personality traits were accessed using the shortened version of Big Five inventory. Participants "perceived stress level" was accessed using perceived stress scale. Loneliness was accessed with a three-item version of the UCLA loneliness scale.

STRESS STUDY RESULTS

showed that individuals with higher levels of neuroticism, openness, extroversion, agreeableness, and lower levels of consciousness perceived higher levels of stress during the pandemic.

LONELINESS STUDY RESULTS

showed that individuals with higher levels of neuroticism, extroversion, and agreeableness AND lower levels of conscientiousness perceive higher levels of loneliness.

Note that the personality trait (openness to experience) was unrelated to levels of loneliness unlike the model with stress level.

Neuroticism and gender were the strongest predictors of both higher loneliness and stress scores. Per (Gross, 1988) study, neuroticism is related to emotion dysregulation so individuals with this personality trait are more likely to announce unpleasant feelings of loneliness. Loneliness though, is a subjective experience that invokes feelings of unsafe and subsequent hyper vigilance to social trends and threats. (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010).

During the pandemic, the vulnerability of such individuals with traits of neuroticism might be due to their emotion regulation strategies such as avoidance, suppression, rumination, and worry. (Baranczuk, 2019).

Neuroticism is a trait disposition that can manifest as various emotional effects such as anger, anxiety, self-consciousness, irritability, emotional instability, and depression. Patients who present with such attributes as anger, impatience and seem easily overwhelmed may possess underlying personality traits of neuroticism. An example: a person who is high in neuroticism may be easily irritable and maybe less open to conversation and easily provoked by seemingly harmless off-handed comments.

Some positive traits of neuroticism include intelligence, humor and a greater sense of self awareness and drive. Persons with these traits tend to take fewer risks and have a strong need to provide for others. They may be self-conscious and shy, tend to internalize phobias such as anxieties and panic, may be associated with self-criticism, increased sensitivity to others' feelings and social anxiety.

Extroversion personality traits:

Study results showed that Individuals with higher extraversion personality traits revealed higher stress and loneliness scores as well. Further studies via a meta-analysis showed a negative link between patients with extroversion personality and loneliness. This revealed that people with high extroversion traits feel less lonely possibly due to their frequent engagements in various activities.

Extroversion personality traits include traits such as being talkative, energetic, assertive, and outgoing. Patients with this disposition often tend to offer their opinions and suggestions during consultation visits. Positive attributes include being sociable, enthusiastic, and friendly and negative attributes can be viewed as people who are attention seeking, easily distracted and unable to spend time alone.

Openness to experience trait

The study found that higher levels of openness were related to higher levels of stress during the pandemic. Openness was shown to be associated with depression, anxiety symptoms and suicide risks. And less fear of infection in the context of COVID-19. Thus "openness to experience" as a personality trait can be a vulnerability factor as it can possibly increase the involvement into various types of risky behaviors which in turn can be related to experiencing higher stress levels.

Examples of openness and characteristics with patient attributes include being open minded, imaginative, creative, and insightful. Not afraid to embrace change, not afraid to embrace disruptions and tackle new interests. It's often viewed as a positive trait because there is usually an intrinsic motivation to pursue knowledge for its own sake. An Example in healthcare practice setting could be patients who are opinionated or with attributes of "Dr. Mom's and Dr. Dad's". (Aghanya, 2021)

Agreeableness

Per study results, agreeableness personality trait was found to be positively associated with stress and loneliness during the pandemic era. Agreeable people in general care about others and are prosocial in nature. Due to pandemic restrictions, they may face certain stress and loneliness as these restrictions limit their abilities to reach out to others and carry out helping behaviors and to protect others.

Study results showed that such individuals exhibited less levels of stress and loneliness compared to other personality traits. Agreeableness trait is one that describes a person's ability to put others needs before their own. A person with this personality trait however, may struggle to assert their wants and needs and preferences. An example is the dependent patient. (Aghanya, 2021)

Conscientiousness

In general, some studies that explored the conscientiousness personality have depicted that conscientiousness is generally related to increased positive effects. It usually involves the use of active problem-solving strategies which leads to lessened distress and loneliness. In general, it's being shown that resilience, coping and self-regulation abilities mediate the link between conscientiousness and distress. Therefore, study results conclude of a possibility that people high in conscientiousness personality benefit from close relationships, cope better, and feel less stressed and lonely during the pandemic.

People with this personality trait tend to be organized, dependable, show self-discipline, are competent and dutiful. They aim for achievement and prefer planned, rather than spontaneous behaviors. An example I've seen in healthcare practices is when a healthcare provider who isn't feeling well presents to the clinic as a patient.

Note that no personality trait is always permanent and consistent. Each trait represents a continuum. Patients may display various traits at different times based on presenting circumstances, but many people usually tend to have a dominant trait based on their psychological disposition, environmental factors, upbringing values and beliefs systems and even based on their culture. (Aghanya, 2021)

Finally, the study discussions suggest that mapping the personality profiles of those who are more vulnerable to stress and loneliness may be crucial for identifying those at risk and can help prevent severe psychological problems. Study limitations were also highlighted. Single source cross-sectional data was used.

Generalizability of findings was not given across gender/age thus it wasn't nationally representative of specific gender/age groups. The researchers recommended that future Study sample data should explore non-self report measures such as fine-grained daily diaries and patient experience sampling designs to better understand the associations between personality and psychological well-being during crisis.

In lieu of these research findings, it is imperative to emphasize that healthcare delivery is not just a job, it is a vocation dedicated to the mission of improving health for all. To help restore the foundation of care delivery through communication, new ideas are needed that meet the needs of an emerging world that is rapidly interconnected via advanced communication technologies. However, while these technological advancements are impressive, they are insufficient to address the unique exploratory holistic approach to care delivery that is required to build and maintain productive clinician patient relationships.

The many individuals who make up the healthcare system such as practitioners of various disciplines, patients, family members and colleagues, can sometimes project their values and beliefs onto the healthcare space based on different life experiences, cultures, and upbringing. Unfortunately maintaining a strict reliance on virtual modes of healthcare delivery practices usher in the risk of inadequately capturing patients' underlying emotions to effectively convey empathetic engagements for more targeted and efficient care delivery practices. (Aghanya, 2021)

To meet the demands of adequately addressing patient's varying psychological stressors, there needs to be a new approach to clinical/nursing/medical education which not only address care management for acute illnesses but seek to explore initiatives which focus on clinical staff and student education while identifying differences in human behaviors due to diverse personality traits and experiences. Such a curriculum will introduce effective approaches for healthcare providers to efficiently manage diverse patient behaviors, attitudes, and rising fears/anxieties brought on by the recent pandemic. This can be achieved by implementing the use of revised educational contents (published literature and online courses) that reveal methodologies to help achieve effective engagement patterns with soft skills of communication. (Aghanya, 2021). These educational materials will serve as supplemental resources and help expand clinical reasoning to bridge the gaps noted in current forms of concrete clinical/nursing/medical educational formats. It offers the chance for healthcare practitioners and students to improve their perceptual grasp of diverse clinical situations to achieve a more trusting environment resulting in better efficiency for care delivery practices.

It is imperative to point out that conscious and subconscious biases embedded in the DNA of culture over long periods of time cannot be eradicated by the stroke of a pen of any organization. It requires concise training to effectively address diverse behaviors and attitudes encountered in the healthcare settings with the sole aim of improving a trusting environment between the healthcare provider and the patient. It isn't uncommon for many establishments to shy away from addressing these difficult topics, unaware that within these weighty discussions lie sustainable brands and adjustments that give birth to solutions better able to withstand the test of varying cultural, political, climates and waves.

II.   CONCLUSION

The author introduces her published books: "Tips for Effective Communication: A vital Tool for Trust Development in Healthcare", "Effective Communication Guidebook for Clinicians" and her online Masterclass courses as resources for clinical/medical/nursing school's educational curriculum. These resources identify various patient characteristics and specific interaction styles suitable for each patient's attributes to improve the chances of achieving a more productive clinician-patient dialogue. They are designed to help explain the processes and complexities of the human system. A system with multivariate hosts which are in constant communication with one another. Resource contents help analyze the relationships between thinking, communication, and healing. Using a transdisciplinary approach, it explores the disciplines of psychology, neuroscience, philosophy of language, linguistics, biology, and health science and reveals how clear thinking and clear communication contribute to the integral health of a person.

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