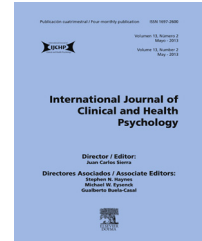




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THEORETICAL ARTICLE

The state of the art on European well-being research within the area of mental health



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Abstract As part of A Roadmap for Mental Health Research in Europe project, the aim of the present study was to perform a systematic mapping of the main publications in peer-reviewed journals for well-being research within the area of mental health or mental disorders in Europe. The PubMed and PsycINFO databases were used to identify papers on well-being within the area of mental health and mental disorders published from January 2007 to September 2014. Mean 5-year impact factors were obtained. The number of publications for each country was analysed by population size and gross domestic product (GDP). A total of 4,423 unique publications were identified. The number of publications increased for the analysed time period. France and the Netherlands had the highest 5-year mean impact factor. Publications per capita were higher in the Nordic countries, Ireland and the Netherlands. After adjusting for GDP, the most productive countries were the Nordic countries and the Netherlands. There is a marked variation in well-being publications by country in Europe. Eastern European countries produce little research taking into consideration the levels of resources available. Research on older adults was underrepresented and should be prioritised.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

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Panorama actual de la investigación europea sobre el bienestar en el área de salud mental

Resumen Como parte del proyecto “Una Hoja de Ruta para la Investigación en Salud Mental en Europa”, el objetivo del presente estudio fue realizar un mapeo sistemático de las principales publicaciones sobre bienestar en el área de salud mental y trastornos mentales en Europa. Se utilizaron las bases de datos PubMed y PsycINFO para identificar los artículos publicados entre Enero de 2007 y Septiembre de 2014. Se obtuvieron factores de impacto medio en cinco años. El número de publicaciones para cada país se analizó por tamaño de la población y producto interior bruto (PIB). Se identificó un total de 4.423 publicaciones. El número de publicaciones fue en aumento durante el periodo de tiempo analizado. Francia y Holanda presentaron el mayor factor de impacto medio en cinco años. El número de publicaciones por habitante fue más elevado en los países nórdicos, Irlanda y Holanda. Al controlar por PIB, los países más productivos fueron los países nórdicos y Holanda. Existe una marcada variación por país en las publicaciones sobre bienestar en Europa. Los países del este de Europa producen escasa investigación, teniendo en cuenta los niveles de recursos disponibles. La investigación en personas mayores estuvo infrarrepresentada y debería ser una prioridad.

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Well-being is becoming a social and political priority in Europe. Researchers in several behavioural and social-science disciplines have recommended supplementing objective economic and social indicators by subjective measures of how people experience their lives (Huppert et al., 2009). Therefore, a great deal of effort is underway to comprehend well-being and how to measure it (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2012). In France, the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress recommended collecting information on the well-being of the population in every country (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2010). In the United Kingdom, the government asked the Office of National Statistics to develop new ways of measuring well-being in order to start keeping track of national progress on improving people's lives, rather than relying solely on economic growth figures (Self, Thomas, & Randall, 2012).

Some of the most widely accepted definitions of well-being are the one proposed by Diener, Suh, Lucas and Smith (1999) that defines well-being as “a category of phenomena that includes a person's satisfaction with various domains of life, his/her global judgments of life satisfaction, and his/her current affective state measured as a time-weighted metric of amount of negative or positive emotions” and the one proposed by Keyes and Lopez (2001) that states that well-being “reflects individual's perception and evaluation of their own lives in terms of their affective states and psychological and social functioning”. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of consensus on the definition of well-being and its relationship with concepts such as quality of life, happiness and functioning in the health context (Salvador-Carulla, Lucas, Ayuso-Mateos, & Miret, 2014).

Diener and his colleagues (1999) in their reviews about subjective well-being research have shown that research on the field has progressed rapidly, moving from describing the demographic characteristics that correlate with well-being to understanding the processes that underlie happiness.

Furthermore, new methods for assessing subjective well-being besides global self-reports became available in the late nineties and at the beginning of the millennium (Diener et al., 1999). The evidence, available at the beginning from wealthier, westernised nations, has recently started to become available from large representative samples from diverse nations (Diener, 2012). Nevertheless, most of the evidence still comes from correlational studies, with few experimental, longitudinal and multi-method approaches (Diener, 2012).

Well-being is gaining momentum in the public health area. The World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe has held several expert meetings on measurement and target-setting for well-being in order to provide guidelines on how to report well-being (World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe, 2012a, 2012b).

The concept of well-being is especially relevant in the mental health and mental disorders area. Mental illness is the single most important cause of a low well-being (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2013). On the other hand, many voices have emphasised the importance of promoting positive mental health and well-being for the general population. The Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing project (2008) argued that achieving a small change in the average level of well-being across the population would produce a large decrease in the percentage of people with mental disorders, and also in the percentage of people who have a sub-clinical disorder.

A Roadmap for Mental Health Research in Europe (ROAMER) is a European project that has as one of its main objectives developing a roadmap on the promotion and integration of mental health research across European countries (Haro et al., 2014). As part of this international project, the aim of the present study was to perform a systematic mapping of the main publications in peer-reviewed journals for well-being research within the area of mental health or mental disorders in Europe. The research associated

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