

Global Mental Health Crisis: Advocacy for an Inclusive Empathy Stance

Chukwudi Joseph Okoro

Guidance and Counseling

Abstract

This paper aligns with the trend of positive psychology and explores relevant, affordable, and practical strategies to enhance global Mental health (MH) conditions. It is believed that MH plays a significant role in ensuring the capacity of individuals to self-actualize and evidently engage in a collaborative lifestyle in society. This lifestyle is described as positive, inclusive, and creative, and enables quality peace in human society. This paper posits that Inclusive Empathy Stance (IES), with its high level of symbolic interactions, is a strategy capable of intentionally engaging every individual and ensuring the quality of their social behaviors. The efforts of various institutions and governments to provide a high quality of life among their citizens are commendable initiatives. This paper, however, suggests that the intentional responsibility of every individual could yield better results in ensuring quality MH and a peaceful lifestyle among global citizens of the world. The global risk condition of human societies, evidently, requires a Higher Intelligence (HI) for effective control. This HI is suggested here as IES. Human problems require human solutions.

Keywords: Mental Health, Human Condition, Symbolic Interaction, Empathy.

Introduction and Background

“The good old days” – this is the slogan that is still often heard in the present moment. It expressly indicates that human life and society were better in the past than it is in the present moment. However, this slogan could be interpreted and disavowed by the high-technology-powered 21st-century societal lifestyle. It is to argue that the good old days cannot be better than the present generation, equipped with high-speed tube rails, auto-monitored and piloted airplanes, and cars. We could also include the octopical sprout of AI tools that are capable of imitating and accomplishing almost every human task and activity.

And so, what is good about “the good old days”? The feedback on “the good old days” is centered around a perceived sense of quality appreciation of human life and relationships. It is to say that there was a perceived sense of social connectedness among individuals and groups (Weingarten, 2023). In the African cultural milieu, for instance, it was common to hear “I am because we are” and “it takes a

village to train a child”. The European slang, despite her radical individualism, managed to trigger a sense of “No child should be left behind”, underscoring a radical sense of inclusive behavior. Although ambiguous, the slogan was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and became law, known today as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which serves as a complement to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is interesting to note that this child rights law has its origin in the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of the United States of America. It was an initiative aimed at combating poverty, believing that education is the key strategy for achieving economic and social freedom for people (Department of Education, USA, 2025). The Asian tendency was communal living and family-focused behaviors. These behaviors are meant to promote family values and success. (Yellow Chair Collective, 2024).

Summarily, the “good” in “the good old days” alludes to the quality motivation of individuals, groups, and institutions to engage in behaviors and policies that seem to encourage and promote the personality of the human person, health, and general well-being than any display of unreserved individualism, preferences for material success and high profit balance.

Human Condition and Mental Health

In the present and modern times, with better technologies for both home and industrial uses, and where distances between cities have been reduced in time, the reports on the quality of human life and condition are not satisfactory. Various data gathering and research institutions have carried out extensive research into the present status quo of various aspects of human life, including workplace burnout, suicide rate, and mental and physical health.

According to AXA Mental Health report of 2025, Mental Health (MH) remains a top-priority challenge worldwide. The report further reviews that the major factors that negatively impact MH include the following:

Table 1:
AXA MH Report, 2025

No	Items	Percentages
1	Financial instability and job insecurity	53%
2	Uncertainty about the future in a rapidly changing world	53%
3	Constant exposure to negative news in the media	45%
4	Social and political unrest	42%
5	Loneliness and social isolation	42%

2025 AXA Mind Health Report

Evidently, the above-listed items are conditional factors that could easily trigger an individual into a full-blown crisis and consequently lead to workplace and social life-related depression, and eventually suicidal ideation. The factors also reveal the low quality of social life of the present time, resulting in

individuals living alone, suffering alone, and sometimes dying alone without the slightest knowledge of close family members, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. This situation is much worrisome, especially in the age of high technologies that have evidently closed in the distance in time and provided individuals with smartphones and tablets for easy multi-systemic communication opportunities.

According to the 2025 MH at Work Report by *Mind Share Partners*, burnout, depression, and anxiety are leading the list in the MH challenges among Americans. The report also reveals that there is undisputable evidence that the concern for fairness practices in the workplace could be contributing to the rising rate of mental challenges faced by individuals in the United States. The example with the United States is on purpose for the fact that the United States of America is modernly termed a “Developed country” with high industrial and democratic characteristics. Now, when “fairness behavior” is a concern in developed countries, it may also be a major concern in societies or countries termed “Developing and Underdeveloped”. Whatever the case may be, it is at least clear that MH issues are serious concerns for every social class of individuals – “the rich also cry”!

The *Global Economic Forum 2025 Reports* reveal a global risks landscape. The nature of the risks further reveals that the global risks across human societies are 100% human-generated and inflicted. These risks include, but are not limited to, pollution, extreme weather events, misinformation and disinformation, societal polarization, decline in health and well-being, crime, and illegal economic activity. Evidently, this is an eye opener; the antidote to human *maladie* is human! The solution to the problem is in the problem! It is important and urgent to realize how human activities and behaviors over the centuries have negatively impacted the natural environment. And more importantly, the long-term consequences of such negative impacts could be nothing less than a self-inflicted holocaust!

Human Condition and Solutions

The human world and societies have lain in a broken state for a long period of time. The declaration of the Universal Human Rights of 1948 by an International body (UN) was a concerted effort to “fix” the world of lethal and gross inhuman activities. As it seems, the thirty (30) items in the Universal Human Rights failed or were not effective in ensuring lasting peace across human societies. In the year Two Thousand (2000), the UN further engaged in consented efforts to bring an end to illegal human activities, and establish peace, quality health, and a safe environment in the world through the Millennium Declarations [docs.un.org/en/A/RES/55/2 & docs.un.org/en/A/56/326]. The Millennium Development Goals of 2015 were swiftly termed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would culminate in the year 2030. The outcomes of these institutional and governmental initiatives for quality peace and health, and a safe environment, are yet to be evaluated and appreciated. A salient philosophical criticism of the SDGs was that the methodology or process was faulty, placing the pursuit of goals over the pursuit of rights (Pecquet, 2023). If individuals are expected to collaborate towards a common goal, then there should, to some extent, be a sense of shared rights and responsibilities for effective delivery and achievement.

Figure 1:
The Seventeen (17) SDGs



SDGs Logo

Michael Green (2015) and the UN (2023) insisted that the priorities of the SDGs must be focused on the well-being of people, such that the shift is made from a wealth-focused orientation to a well-being-focused orientation. This would be a significant step towards the success of the SDGs. The Global Social Progress Index report of 2025 reveals a general stagnation of the global human population (170 countries) in three major areas of human life, namely: basic human needs, foundations of well-being, and opportunity. This paper highly appreciates the concerted efforts of various human institutions, including Governments, Educational institutions, Religious institutions, and other cooperative establishments, to ensure a human society where every individual is respected and given equal and safe opportunities to self-actualize. It is important to point out the inalienable or irreplaceable role individuals need to play to actualize these goals. The rights and responsibilities of individuals must be explicitly expressed. Individual efforts must complement global efforts. The consciousness or the intentionality of the individual must be evident in these endeavors. The effectiveness of any national, international, or global laws lies in their conscious and intentional implementation by individuals in every corner of the globe, without undue supervision by law enforcement agents. Evidently, this paper does not refer to illegal and corrupt national and international laws and policies. It is no longer enough to create and establish institutions to tackle and ensure quality social life in societies. These regulative or law enforcement institutions still require and depend on human interventions and initiatives to achieve

effectiveness and credibility. The general MH level of a given society depends on the accumulated MH level of individuals in the society. It is good to have established laws and regulations to regulate citizens of any given country; it is better when every citizen of the country has consciously and consentingly personalized those laws and regulations and is willing to abide by them without any undue external enforcement.

Human Condition and Empathy as a Strategic Solution

The participation of individuals in the running of society would need a strategic model and modality. This model should be able to ensure that individuals of every social class have the capacity to effectively and freely accomplish lawful behavior without any restriction and undue enforcement by any external force. This paper suggests the inclusive empathy stance (IES) as a strategic model to enable individuals to build and maintain a significant level of motivation for positive, inclusive, and creative behaviors. These behaviors are designed to keep individuals in a good state of MH and build significant leverage for a quality societal life.

In general, and briefly, empathy is explained as the ability of an individual to engage in quality behaviors with their immediate and distant environment, through feelings and mental understanding of the totality of phenomena so presented.

Arithmetically, empathy could be expressed as:

$$E = uF + UA$$

“where E stands for Empathy, U stands for Understanding, F stands for Feeling, and A stands for Action (behavior).”

Every quality, empathic action, or behavior is achieved through the navigation of individuals' feelings and eventually culminates in a new behavior that is qualitatively informed (shared understanding). This said, empathy is not just an expression of emotion, but an expression of emotional intelligence (EI).

It first engages the individual in self-discovery and understanding. This self-understanding enables the individual to symbolically engage with others in quality behaviors (Riess, 2017). It is the totality of such behaviors that this paper refers to as positive, inclusive, and creative behaviors. It enables individuals to build up a quality MH level and consequently build a collaborative human society, ensuring, in the long term, national and international peace and security (UNESCO, 2025).

The idea of “inclusive empathy” is deliberate so as to insist on the very nature of empathy behaviors. Empathy symbolically engages the self with others and the environment, both animate and inanimate beings. It is this distinct characteristic that places empathy as a higher human competency. It explores the natural human ability to engage the individual in a subjective understanding (*u*) of the self and others and sequentially engages the self and others in an objective understanding of human and environmental realities. And finally, it consequently leads the individual and others into a practical shared understanding (*U*) of the existential phenomena in question. This shared understanding enables the self and others to arrive at positive, inclusive, and creative responses or behaviors in response to the existential phenomena so presented. In this methodological or pedagogical engagement, empathy, as it

seems, provides a significant disposition and leverage for symbolic interactions among individuals. Symbolic interaction preludes to the characteristic of encounters among individuals; it is intentional, respectful, and value or meaning-oriented. Such encounters promote individuals' sense of belonging and security, and as such, ensure a quality MH level of individuals in society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the level of uncertainties in modern society, inarguably, is contributing the most to the general low level of MH among individuals. It becomes necessary to put in place a strategy for action. This strategy, to be effective, must be relevant, affordable, and practicable (RAP). As such, in this advocacy for an inclusive empathy competency, no individual should be left behind, not even the environment; individuals cannot be healthy in an unhealthy environment. A healthy individual is one living in a good MH, which is the source of energy and competence towards self-actualization and progress of global initiatives. Indeed, there is a need for higher intelligence (HI) or competency so that humans do not continue to generate, maintain, and inflict lethal behaviors on themselves, others, and the environment. Let “the good old days” come back with its personal, communal, and environmental-oriented concerns for a peaceful and healthier human condition. This advocacy is on!

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