International Journal of EDUCATION & WELL-BEING IJEW

Volume 4, Issue 2, 2026, 143-155

ISSN: 2980-3489
DOI: 10.62416/ijwb-83

www.inteduwellbeing.com
Article Type

Recieved: 08/12/2025 Accepted: 14/05/2026 Published: 15/08/2026

Biblical Perspective of Thinking and Mental Health: A Consideration of Philippians 4:8

Düşünme ve Ruh Sağlığına Kutsal Kitap Perspektifinden Bir Bakış: Filipililer 4:8 Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme

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Abstract

Mental health has become a focus of deliberation not only in the academic but also in every human gathering including church and community. This is as a result of the prevalence of factors like hardship, economic downturn, relationships breakdown and separation among family members that have negative influence on people's mental health. Professional counsellors and medical personnel have always handled the issue of mental health, but the current trend requires that pastoral counsellors and pastors engage in educating and counselling people on the issue of mental health to bring about a healthy society. Thinking, specifically positive thinking, has much to do with mental health and has been written about by different scholars; but not many have been specific on what positive thinking is about. Therefore, there is a need to consider biblical perspective on thinking in order to present positive biblical approach to mental health. The Bible is a holistic book that deals with every aspect of human existence. Using qualitative approach of research, specifically desk research, this paper explored how Philippians 4:8 present the power of thinking on mental health. It was found that the passage gave a positive thinking framework that can influence human existence and is essential to mental health. It was recommended that pastoral counsellors, pastors and teachers educate people to engage in positive thinking as prescribed in Philippians 4:8, irrespective of the prevailing circumstance in the society, to keep them in good mental health.

Keywords: biblical perspective of thinking, human existence, mental health, professional counsellors and medical personnel, relationship breakdown

Öz

Ruh sağlığı, yalnızca akademik çevrelerde değil, kilise ve toplum da dâhil olmak üzere insanların bir araya geldiği her ortamda tartışılan temel konulardan biri hâline gelmiştir. Bu durum; yaşam güçlükleri, ekonomik gerileme, ilişkilerin bozulması ve aile üyeleri arasındaki ayrılıklar gibi bireylerin ruh sağlığını olumsuz etkileyen faktörlerin yaygınlaşmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Ruh sağlığı konusu geleneksel olarak profesyonel psikolojik danışmanlar ve sağlık personeli tarafından ele alınmaktadır. Bununla birlikte günümüzdeki gelişmeler, sağlıklı bir toplum oluşturabilmek için pastoral danışmanların ve din görevlilerinin de ruh sağlığı konusunda bireyleri bilgilendirme ve onlara danışmanlık sunma süreçlerine katılmalarını gerekli kılmaktadır. Düşünme, özellikle de olumlu düşünme, ruh sağlığıyla yakından ilişkili olup farklı araştırmacılar tarafından ele alınmıştır. Ancak olumlu düşünmenin kapsamını açık ve belirgin biçimde açıklayan çalışmaların sayısı sınırlıdır. Bu nedenle ruh sağlığına yönelik olumlu ve Kutsal Kitap temelli bir yaklaşım ortaya koyabilmek amacıyla düşünmenin Kutsal Kitap perspektifinden incelenmesine ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Kutsal Kitap, insan varoluşunun her boyutunu ele alan bütüncül bir eserdir. Bu çalışmada, nitel araştırma yaklaşımı ve özellikle doküman incelemesi yöntemi kullanılarak Filipililer 4:8 ayetinin düşünmenin ruh sağlığı üzerindeki gücünü nasıl ortaya koyduğu incelenmiştir. İnceleme sonucunda söz konusu ayetin, insan yaşamını etkileyebilecek ve ruh sağlığının korunması açısından önem taşıyan olumlu bir düşünme çerçevesi sunduğu belirlenmiştir. Pastoral danışmanların, din görevlilerinin ve öğretmenlerin, toplumda hâkim olan koşullar ne olursa olsun, bireylerin ruh sağlıklarını koruyabilmeleri amacıyla onları Filipililer 4:8'de önerilen biçimde olumlu

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Abolarin, I., O. & Alofe, V., A. (2026). Biblical Perspective of Thinking and Mental Health: A Consideration of Philippians 4:8. International Journal of Education & Well-Being, 4(2), 143-155. https://doi.org/ 10.62416/ijwb-83

düşünmeye teşvik etmeleri önerilmektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Düşünmenin Kutsal Kitap perspektifi, insan varoluşu, ruh sağlığı, profesyonel psikolojik danışmanlar ve sağlık personeli, ilişkilerin bozulması

Introduction

Mental health is an important aspect of human existence that determines the behavior, creativity, existential ability and productivity of any individual. It has become a major area of concern and discuss in different disciplines including theology and pastoral counselling. Because of the importance of mental health to human existence, different organizations have carried out many studies on how to improve mental health in many human societies as studies are showing that many people are becoming mentally challenged. The prevalence of mental ill-health has led to many inhumane experiences such as suicide, homicide, toxic relationship, irrational behavior, broken marriages, poor performance in different aspect of life, depression, and death.

Different efforts have been made to change the narrative about mental health; but there are evidences that the problem of mental ill-health is still common, even in higher level, in different societies including church communities. There have been occasions where members of some congregations at different times carried gun and shot people who were worshiping in churches (Taro, 2025; Yusuf, 2022). Students are committing suicides in institutions of higher learning including Christian owned institutions (Ebiwei, 2023; Iweama, et al., 2024; Omeje, et al., 2022; Suleiman, 2025). Many people are in depression even though they attend worship services in different worship houses. Husbands are killing wives and *vice-versa* due to mental ill-health (Aborisade, et al., 2019; Aborisade & Shontan, 2017; Natsa, 2025). The escalating nature of the phenomenon and its repercussions call for more approaches to proffering possible solutions to, if not totally eliminate, reduce mental ill-health among humans.

Some of the approaches that have been used to cure or manage mental ill-health include medication, counselling, and prayer (Nanji & Olivier, 2024). While these approaches may be effective, the issue of mental illness is escalating calling for a need to consider an alternative approach that will not just be curative but also preventive measures that could help individuals. Thinking has been presented as a major determinant of mental well-being (Rostami, Sefat, & Fathi, 2017; WHO, 2015; Yadav, 2020). There are myriad of literature on thinking and its effect on different aspects of human life including mental health (Machin, 2023; Slameto, 2017; Zhang, 2002), but no thinking framework as suggested in the Bible has been connected with mental health. The paper aimed at presenting a biblical thinking framework as an alternative to the existing thinking approaches and how it affects mental health. The framework is direct and specific about what thinking should be about. Since the Bible serves as the manual for living for every human, using qualitative and specifically desk research, this study considered thinking from biblical perspective focusing on the book of Philippian 4:8, as a positive measure to prevent and cure mental ill-health. Using traditional or narrative method of literature review, plethora of literature both in hard and soft copies was consulted, analyzed and organized according to the different ideas that emanated from the study in order to establish thinking framework in Philippian 4:8 as possible alternative, curative and management factor for mental well-being that can be applied by pastoral counsellors. Traditional method of literature review allows for exploring and summarizing existing research on a topic without a strict step-by-step review. The method utilized a broad and thoughtful discussion that highlighted key ideas in the literature and connected different perspectives (Belotto, 2018; Castro, 2026; Grant & Booth, 2009; Synder, 2019). Thinking, many times is presented by scholars in general form without being specifics or at most referring to positive thinking; Philippian 4:8 does not only present thinking in positive way but also gives a framework that can be applied in different aspect of life by different people. Therefore, this paper established

the framework found in Philippians 4:8 as an effective alternative to other approaches to mental health.

Understanding Mental Health

Mental health has been a hidden phenomenon in many societies because of stigmatization and its misunderstanding. There are societies where anyone who is discovered to have been going through mental health issue is tagged “mad”. In such situation the person is tied and quarantined to avoid been seen by others. Sometime, the person is starved to death in order to remove the shame brought on the family or relatives. In their study, the WHO (2003) declared that the issue of mental health should no longer be hidden. Mental health is crucial to overall well-being of people, societies and nations. To be healthy is to be in state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity. Mental health is not just about lack of mental disorders, but a state of well-being that enables individuals to realize their abilities, cope with normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make meaningful contribution to communities. It includes perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence and recognition of the ability to realize personal intellectual and emotional potential. It is how individuals think and feel about themselves and their life, and that affects how they cope and manage in times of adversity (Bhurgra, Till & Sartorius, 2013). In addition, mental health involves ability to recognize the Supreme God of heaven as the Creator of the universe to whom all allegiance is to be yielded (Cook, 2020; Galderisi, et al., 2015; Galderisi, 2024; Gautam, et al., 2024). A person in state of mental health has the ability to form and maintain affectionate relationships with others, to perform social roles usually played in the person’s culture and to manage change, recognize, acknowledge and communicate positive actions and thoughts as well as to manage emotions such as sadness and anger (Bhurgra, Till & Sartorius, 2013).

The prevalence of mental ill-health is high. According to WHO (2003), as of 2003, 450 million people suffer from mental health or behavior disorder and about one million people commit suicide annually. Sometime people consider themselves as not affected by mental health disorder but study showed that one in four families has at least one member with mental health disorder. It affects society and not only the person with mental disorder. If the statement by WHO (2003) was true that mental health disorder is higher among the poor, homeless, the unemployed, persons with low education, victim of violence, and abused individuals, then Nigeria is a nation of many mental health disorder people. According to Adeleke et. al. (2025), approximately 40 million Nigerians are affected by mental health conditions.

Although many people suffer for mental health disorder, only few people have the awareness of its existence due to fast-paced life of the 21st century. Some of the factors impacting mental health include biological, social, psychological and environmental. Specifically, common factors like sleep pattern, level of exercise, the extent to which people spend time with their families and friends, housing, and overdependence on technological devises have significantly contributed to mental ill-health (Bhurgra, Till & Sartorius, 2013; Sealy, 2023; Jhunjhunwala, Das, Mhatre, Thukral & Aggarwal, 2020). This has manifested in different ways like deficit/hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, and behavior disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, risk behavior, schizophrenia, and death (Bhurgra, Till & Sartorius, 2013; Jhunjhunwala, Das, Mhatre, Thukral & Aggarwal, 2020).

Different approaches have been utilized to treat mental health disorder, although the methods may differ between children and adults. For children, non-verbal modalities have been used like art therapy, play therapy, and games while in adults approach could be client-centered therapy, individual counselling, group therapy, medication, and holistic psychotherapy (Jhunjhunwala,

Das, Mhatre, Thukral & Aggarwal, 2020). Bhurgra, Till and Sartorius (2013) argued that the core senses of mental health include trust, challenge, competency, accomplishment and humor. And the capacities that mental health offers include the ability to develop psychologically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Besides the different approaches for the treatment of mental health disorder, thinking as the basis of human behavior has a profound influence.

Thinking

Heidegger (1968) wrote extensively on thinking and many of what he discussed since then are still applicable in the human existence in the 21st century. According to him, thinking is more of living than an act. It is a process of lifelong of finding relevance in various situations that include problem-solving in personal, professional and societal life utilizing reflection and philosophical inquiry (Pacheco, 2024). Thinking is remembering who humans are and where they belong; it is also focusing on the whole self on what lies before and taking to heart and mind the things ahead in other to discover their nature and the truth in them. It is an ability to engage in useful, self-regulatory judgment, and ability to analyze arguments (Pollard, 2020). Thinking is something that needs to be learnt in order to know how to engage in it. Every human possesses the possibility to think; but it does not necessarily guarantee that everyone is capable of thinking. In order to think, individual needs to incline to do it. This makes the biblical perspective of calling to do or engage in thinking an imperative for humans. Thinking is a conscious cognitive process involving analysis, synthesis, problem-solving, decision-making, and critical evaluation that allow individual to manipulate mental representation

Many individuals called philosophers have spent times engaging in thinking and the products of their engagement have been documented and people are still consulting and utilizing their thoughts, irrespective of where such utilization leads (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Whereas, the biblical approach to thinking is unidirectional, leading to human well-being. Thinking according to Sankararaman (2014) “is an inner kind of mental process in which mental contents follow one another and which can be studied independently of the needs, motives and desires of an individual” (p. 45). In broad sense, thinking includes all forms of cognition, perception, imagination, memory and conception; but in a restricted way, it is imagination or reasoning. While imagination is mental manipulation, reasoning is mental exploration. Imagination is when previously observed facts are recalled and the images are combined to and manipulated into a new patterns; whereas, reasoning mentally explores new relations that exist between facts. They are both independent of the present and seek to meet a possible situation in the future (Sankararaman, 2014).

Thinking assists people to simplify intricate information, generating fresh perspectives, discover answers to challenges, make well-informed decisions, and scrutinize information and concepts thoughtfully. As a mental instrument, thinking empowers individuals to explore and comprehend the world around them, adapt to obstacles, and arrive at significant conclusions (Pacheco, 2024). The role of thinking in someone’s life, especially from childhood, is critical that White (1903) advised that children be trained to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of other people’s thought. She followed the biblical injunction of training up a child in the way he/she should go (Proverb 22:6). The training includes positive thinking. The mind has been associated as the center for thinking (Brocas & Carrillo, 2008; Knupsky & Caballero, 2020) and because of this, the mind becomes the specific psychological portion of human that needs to be guarded to ensure a continuous springing of positive thinking that has been perceived as the product of the mind which when it wanders leads to mental illness (Yamaoka & Yukawa, 2020).

Positive thinking is the ability to focus on the good in any given situation without necessarily ignoring the reality or make light of a problem. It is approaching the good and the bad in life with

the expectation that things will go well. This is the biblical perspective and Jesus in Revelation 21:5 made it clear that irrespective of the current situation, he will make all things new. This calls for positively directional thinking not just engaging in thinking. In his study of Covid-19 pandemic, Yadav (2020) found that positive thinking is a potential solution to mental health issues and leads to overall happiness. Positive thinking with optimism is critical to stress management and healthy life generally. Positive thinking brings longer life span, greater resistance to illness, lower blood pressure, better stress management, better coping skills and less depression (Kamarulzaman & Ibrahim, 2024; Thuraka, Ogirri, & Pasupuleti, 2024; Yamaoka & Yukawa, 2020). According to Yadav (2020) the following are the effect of positive thinking on mental health:

1. Positive thinking has been found to be associated with improved psychological functioning, more favorable life outcomes, better physical health, and increased longevity.
2. Positive thinking has a direct positive impact on mental health and happiness. Those who engage in frequent positive thoughts and self-talk display fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression, and display greater overall satisfaction with life.
3. Individuals who practice positive thinking tend to have higher levels of life satisfaction, better coping skills, and more successful problem-solving abilities.
4. Positive thinking helps increase self-esteem, reduce negative emotions, and help individuals see the potential in themselves and their lives.
5. Those who engage in positive thinking approach life's challenges with more resilience, viewing them as opportunities for growth and development.
6. Positive thinking leads fewer episodes of depression and anxiety.
7. Positive thinking leads to increased life satisfaction.
8. Positive thinking leads to fewer physical symptoms of illness.
9. It increases the likelihood of taking proactive steps to maintain mental health, such as getting more sleep, exercising, and engaging in social activities.
10. It increases productivity and performance at work, as well as making it easier to cope with stressful situations.
11. It strengthens immune system and helps people stay healthy.
12. It reduces loneliness and social isolation.
13. It brings about a sense of fulfillment in life.
14. It leads to higher optimistic attitude (pp. 277–279).

Different scholars have suggested ways of thinking positively. This paper adopts the ones suggested by Walden University (2025) as follows:

1. Notice and reframe negative thoughts
2. Practice gratitude
3. Be kind to yourself
4. Do something good for others
5. Laugh

All of these are encouraged by biblical perspective of thinking. Despite the knowledge whether philosophical or psychological, practices and suggestions for thinking by philosophers and psychologists although having their places, mental health disorder is still in the increase in the society. Many humans' none-directional thoughts that may be perceived as "positive" have led to risk behaviors and death, fights and wars. The secular framework for thinking which is based on logical analysis may have not position people on the path of mental health and well-being,

therefore the need to examine the biblical framework of thinking which is directional and specific.

Biblical Perspective of Thinking

God created humans as rational beings, individuals who have the capacity to think (Brand, 2009), conclude and take decision. God himself invited humans to come and think along with him as recorded in Isaiah 1:18. The expression is *Nif'al wayiqtōl* (Hebrew) which is cohortative between God and humans to think/reason together. One of the evidences that God created humans with intelligence and capacity to think is the ability of humans to discover and invents things that could make the earth habitable after sin has marred the perfect creation of God. There is also an awareness that the same capacity to think has been abused by humans to make things that could also destroy the earth and human life. The interest of God is that humans use the thinking skills positively, in a guided way to bring about a better human society.

Throughout the Bible history and life, humans have used thinking capacity both positively and negatively. This paper focused on highlighting the positive utilization of thinking capacity that can improve human beings life, especially to improve mental health. The Bible promotes and encourages thinking by presenting it in different ways (Pollard, 2020). One of the encouraging advices in the Bible is Colossians 2:8 which states "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." And in another passage it is written, "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21–22). The Greek word *dokimazo* (test, critically examine) suggested critical analysis of every available evidence which requires thinking before conclusion and holding fast what is good (Valdes, 2023). The Bible encourages continuous growth in thinking as presented in 1 Corinthians 14:20 that stated "Brothers, do not be children in your thinking." The passage not only encouraged growing in thinking but also made it mandatory because the word "do" *ginomai* in Greek is imperative, a command to grow in thinking. A continuous positive thinking leads to positive mindset which becomes the determinant of individual's approach to situation.

The type of thinking promoted by the Bible is the one that can lead to health and growth of individuals that they may enjoy life in Christ. The book of 2 Corinthians 10:5 made this clear by stating "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey God." The passage also indicated that a positive thinker takes charge of his/her thought. Raichur (2017) opined that the Bible encourages directing thinking towards those things that honor God and are good for humans. According to him, thinking ought to lead the thinker to find peace and life. When thinking becomes negative, the outcome is that the thinker becomes diminished and negatively affect others. Making reference to Romans 8:6, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" Raichur (2007) stated that bad thinking leads to death not just of the thinker but everything that is good. Wrong, negative or bad thinking has destructive consequences. This is the reason that considering thinking from the biblical perspectives in relation to mental health is critical.

In this age of technology, someone would expect that people's thinking practices would be enhanced positively; but studies (de Barros, 2024; Deckker & Sumanasekara, 2025; Gunjan, 2024; Knvs & Pramod, 2024; Kumar, 2023) indicated that the case is contrary. Technology, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI) machines have reduced many humans to ordinary moving images that do not think. This is as a result of overdependence on the technological devices. Many find it difficult to understand their personality unless AI tells them who they are. The overdependence on AI, instead of leading to mental health has in many instances led to mental health disorder. People are exposed to both the good and evil on the internet and many who do not know how to set

boundary have found themselves in unhealthy life style, depression, and sometime death. In the era when technology has not evolved as it is in this 21st Century, Buttrick (1955) opined that many minds were battered with negative information from many platforms like radio and television. The situation is worse in the age of technology when minds are being bombarded with unhealthy shows and information from myriads of platforms like WhatsApp, facebook, instagram, tiktok, general internet, etc. Many people do not only surf or browse but live in the internet with altered thinking capacity. Thinking, as important as it is, leads to a destination and invites consequences (Raichur, 2007). Therefore, positive thinking should be a discipline for people of this age to constantly engage. People's mind ought to always be occupied with pure and elevated thoughts (Buttrick, 1955).

In Romans 12:2 Paul urged humans to be transformed by the renewal of their mind. The Greek word used for renewal is *anakainosis*; this implies a continuous positive changing of the mind which is the center for thinking. This renewal takes place through the different stimuli and environmental factors that individuals get exposed to and interact with. Some of such factors include audio and video from the internet and social media or environment, and books. This is the reason it is expedient to spend time considering biblical perspectives of things and situations. Anything that can have positive influence on the mind is to be encouraged. The Bible gave the framework of the types of stimuli human beings should engage themselves in thinking. This is found in the major biblical passage this study focused on, the book of Philippians 4:8Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Paul in this passage admonished that the mind should be engaged upon eight principles of thinking, which this paper calls thinking framework, that lead to healthy and victorious living. Scholars do not agree on the number of virtues presented by Paul in this passage. While some consider the list to be six and that the last two are summaries of the six, others consider the list to be eight (Lenski, 1946; Maclaren, 1984; Nichol, 1957). For instance, Lenski (1946) perceived that there are six virtues listed by Paul and the six are the same. But Maclaren (1984) presented virtue as summarizing the first four while praise summarizes the last two. Whether six or eight, the thinking characteristics are to be carried in the heart and mind for fruitful and healthy living. Maclaren (1984) called them characteristics of thoughts. The passage is constructed in the present imperative, indicating that it is a command; this is shown in the word *logizomai* (dwell on) as used in the passage. Thinking on performance of good works which merits commendation is commanded (Calvin, 1981). Dwelling on or fixing the mind on positive thinking is to be a continuous command to obey. This is a call to discipline the mind by setting it always on positive thinking. The mind cannot be empty or totally be at rest without engaging in one thought or another. Whatever the minds ruminates upon at any given time determines the level of health of the person at the time. When the mind is busy engaging in negative thinking activity, the person becomes anxious; the anxiety can then lead to further unhealthy mental behavior that can even be manifested in the physical body of the person. Shankar, Premavathy and Preetha (2020) indicated that what someone thinks can affect the person's feeling and eventually the body. According to her when an individual gets clear about the triggers of thoughts, the person can have the power to change his/her emotion and then the health. Positive thinking is linked to better immunity to illness while negative thinking is linked to reduced immunity (Shankar, Premavathy and Preetha, 2020). There are individuals who have minds like cities with no wall that anything can enter any time; engaging in positive thinking builds the wall of the mind and protect it from destructive intrusion

of negative thought. Therefore, Paul in this passage gave an exhortation to think about right and positive things that can bring about healthy living mentally, physically and spiritually. The framework is given in the following table.

Table 1: *The Thinking Framework: From Philippians 4:8*

	Object of Thinking	Meaning
1.	Whatever is **True** (Grk: *alethes*)	Something that conforms to reality; something that is valid, reliable and honest. Mind should be exercised, breathed, braced, lifted and filled by engaging them into contact with truth.
2.	Whatever is **Honorable** (Grk: *semnos*)	Something worthy of respect or entitled to honor; something that inspires reverence or awe or dignity. Solemn, grave, and serious thought should be familiar to the minds not frivolities, not mean things.
3	Whatever is **Just** (Grk: *dikaios*)	Something that conforms to the perfect standard of righteousness. Great thought of duty, obligation, what ought to be and do should be familiar to thought.
4	Whatever is **Pure** (Grk: *hagnos*)	Something free of defilement; something that is stainless, without contamination
5	Whatever is **Lovely** (Grk: *prosphile*)	Something that is lovable, endearing, gracious, charming, pleasing, amiable, and winsome. Emotion should be positive
6	Whatever is **Commendable** (Grk: *epainos*)	Something worthy of being commended, praiseworthy
7	Any **Excellence** (Grk:	Something of virtue, goodness
8	Anything **Worthy of Praise** (Grk. ἔπαινος or εὔφημος	Expressing one's esteem of others and their virtues, something of good report, reputable something approvable

Anxiety (Greek: *merimna*) is an easy and early mental response to negative thinking. It means to divide or to draw at different direction. This is what anxiety does; pulls individual in two directions mentally when the mind is to be focused keeping one direction at a time. Paul in Philippians 4:8 gave the framework of positive things the mind can engage every time to combat anxiety which is an early symptom of mental health disorder. When anxiety is not handled it leads to more complicated mental health disorders and possibly depression. The Bible makes it clear that people's lives are the product of their thinking; as it is stated in Proverbs 23:7 "For as he thinks in his heart, so he is." In essence, when the thinking is positive and healthy, the person will be healthy. Wrong thinking leads to wrong feeling and then the heart and mind are pulled apart, then the person enters into worry-situation. Many times, different people have made reference to Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) as saying, "Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny" (Astala, 2017). This statement indicates that thinking is a basic foundation of many other things—health, growth, development—in people's lives; when thinking goes wrong, other things have the chance to be wrong; and also when thinking is healthy, other things have chance to be healthy. The following figure represents the thinking framework listing the eight elements of positive thinking leading to mental wellness.

Figure: *Positive Thinking as in Philippians 4:8 and Mental Health*

Maclaren (1984) having considered the argument of Paul in Philippians 4:8 concluded that thought molds action, thought and work make character. This conclusion follows the idea of Waldo Emerson on the power of thinking as the beginning of the way to destiny. There is not a thought that comes into the mind and is entertained that does not contribute its own little but appreciable impact to behavior. In essence, mental health is a function or a product of the thinking engagement of a person. If individuals think right they will live right and when they live right they will think right. Instead of thinking about differences with others, or being anxious about daily needs, people could exercise their minds on positive virtues to eliminate worry, anxiety and eventually mental health disorder (Nichol, 1957).

The role of pastoral counsellors in preventing and curing mental health disorder is critical, especially in the environment where speaking about mental health disorder publicly is a taboo and many are going through the expereince. Pastoral counsellors have opportunity of identifying and engaging people in conversation about their experiences and situation without being made opened publicly. Pastoral counselling reflects the Christian tradition of soul healing and the values of clinical practices that facilitates the expression and exploration of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Kilengi, 2023). Pastoral counsellors serve as emotional guides integrating biblical principles with psychological and philosophical insights to help people navigate different life issues. Pastoral counsellors are to lead people into an abundant life God ordained for all humanity (Odeleye, 2022). The frame as presented in this paper can enhance the effectiveness of pastoral counsellors.

During counselling intervention, pastoral counsellors can focus the attention of the individuals on the different thinking frame. This is to help the individuals change their thinking pattern. When people change their thinking pattern, actions will also be changed. Pastoral counsellors understand thinking as the foundation of every human behavior and therefore, assist clients to modify their thinking through counselling process. Pastoral counsellors may give assignments that will apply

the thinking framework to individuals.

Generally, counsellors are teachers. Therefore, pastoral counsellors being teachers have an open privilege to not wait until people experience mental health disorder before they get engaged in helping them. Through teaching engagement in church, school, and community, pastoral counsellors can teach people about engaging in positive thinking following the framework given by Paul in Philippians 4:8. Helping people generally to modify their thinking approach will serve as preventive model to mental health disorder. This may reduce the number of people with mental health disorder. Promoting positive thinking according to the framework may be critical to reducing the number of mental health disorder cases in the society. This is essential especially in this technological age where many people over-dependent on technological machines like AI to know who they are, if they are happy or not, what to do in a specific situation. Effort to turn people back to biblical positive thinking will reduce many more casualties of mental health disorder and its consequences. Pastoral counsellors are to be advocates and vanguards of positive thinking using the frame presented in Philippians 4:8 to prevent or cure mental health disorder.

Conclusion

It is clear that thinking is critical to health generally and mental health specifically. Scholars have written about the importance of thinking to mental health with suggestions of practical ways to develop positive thinking or change negative thought to positive. When it comes to the specific characteristics to engage the mind that will result in positive thinking, Paul in Philippians 4:8 categorically mentioned eight virtues that are profitable to think about. The list gives a kind of framework that professionals, teachers, pastoral counsellors and everyone who is involved in working with people to build health and especially mental health, could utilized to achieve a desired goal. It takes discipline and intentionality to work on this and consistently engage in practicing them. They are the virtues of life. The framework is a necessity in this age when minds are bombarded by myriad of negative information and shows that have led many into mental health disorder that has been manifested in different health issues like depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, different risk-behaviors, and even death. This paper recommends that the pastoral counsellors, pastors and teachers understand the biblical perspective and framework of thinking in Philippians 4:8 and use it as the basis of practice and not just depend on psychological and scientific approach for mental health. The biblical framework for thinking is holistic and will be advantageous to mental health promotion.

Declarations

Acknowledgements: Not applicable.

Authors' contributions: IOA and VAA contributed equally to the conceptualization and design of the study, literature review, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, manuscript drafting, and critical revision of the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Competing interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Funding: Not applicable.

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Not applicable.

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