Chapter 18
Appreciative Inquiry and Mental Health Improvement:
A Review on Applicative Potential at Individual Level

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ABSTRACT

Appreciative inquiry is an 'asset-based' approach that focuses on the positive things of life. Through its 4D cycle and principles it generates transformation of organization. AI when practiced goes through 4D cycle of discovery, dream, design, and destiny. An individual gets the scope to rediscover and reorganize when passing through these four phases. This liberates the mind through exploration and introspection. Interventions of AI even clarify the 'shadow' area of the human mind. The chapter tries to establish AI as a potential tool that can be used at individual level to aid in up gradation of mental health awareness through reviewing existing literature in this field.

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPT OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

The concept of appreciative inquiry was propounded by Cooperrider and Srivastava in 1986 but it has its origin in the theory of social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). David Cooperrider conducted his doctoral study on physicians engaged in leadership position at United States medical centre. They were asked to tell stories about their victories and failures (Cram, 2010). Coghlan et al, (2003) in their research article mentioned that "He was amazed at the level of positive cooperation, innovation, and egalitarian governance when they were at their most effective". This led Cooperrider and his guide Dr. Srivastava to think that emphasis upon the strength and positive sides of an organization can be transitional based on the logic that "organizations move toward what they study" (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2003). This process of AI involves 4D cycle of discovery, dream and design to shape the future

and effort to transform the destiny (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Culture of employee engagement can be built, and it should be fabricated through the tenacious efforts of managers and leaders in the organization, deliberate efforts can be made to build culture, positive work environment leads to positive outcome of performance (Chakraborty & Ganguly, 2019).

Conventional approaches in order to bring organizational changes were criticized by many researchers, then this new approach came into being which included both social and psychological perspective (Gergen 1982, Gergen 1990, Bushe & Coetzer 1995). Appreciative inquiry is research method which focuses on organizational change though positive attributions i. e. appreciative inquiry emphasizes on exploring the strength of the organization in lieu of weakness for its growth and prosperity. In the recent past the application of appreciative inquiry in the organizations has grown brilliantly (Dick, 2004).

BACKGROUND

Appreciative inquiry was created to provide an unconventional approach to solve organizational problem and was an alternative for problem solving approach (Beattie, 2018). Problem solving method mostly deals and focuses on what is not doing well or wrong in the organization, where as appreciative inquiry deals and encourages the positive things as capable components behind organizational development. Watkins et al (2016) described appreciative inquiry as an efficient tool to change social system. They also depicted that it is also capable of bringing change in complex human world. According to Bushe (2007) the method of appreciative inquiry is not only limited to positive characteristics but a pursuit of novel ideas, theories, models that discover and manifest cumulative desires. Many researchers also commented that AI should not just merely be treated as a tool for organizational development but an ideology and inclination which can reform and reshape primarily the process of organization learning, design and development (Watkins & Mohr 2001).AI is more about "both a philosophy and a worldview, with particular principles and assumptions and a structured set of core processes and practices for engaging people in identifying and co creating an organization's future" (Coughlan et al, 2003). The applicative potentials of AI are vast. The method and principles of appreciative inquiry were thoroughly investigated by many researchers. For example- Van Buskirk (2002) conducted his research on urban catholic schools and found satisfactory transformational results. AI was proved to be useful even in enhancing personal relations (Klem, 2005) of the individuals. Kaye et al (2008) in their research also explained that AI interventions provides the opportunity to its participants -to explore and depict the best experiences of life, assessment of life giving components and to express the tales of their personal eminence. Laertius & Yonge, (2006) described that AI principles are reinforced by the psychology of adult development through introspection or knowing oneself and actualizing one's innate strengths. These avenues of self reflections through narrations become the pillar for transformation even at individual level. Appreciating the good things in life, being content, grateful and interpersonal resilience improves one's sense of well being. These factors can even contribute positively towards the improvement of participant's mental health.

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