

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH: AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

Lívia Vieira Essado Silva¹
Yasmine Fernandes Marques²
Rafaella Yokota Guedes³
Bruno Silva Romano⁴
Karla Cristina Naves de Carvalho⁵
Universidade Evangélica de Goiás –UniEVANGÉLICA¹²³⁴⁵

ABSTRACT

The Unified Health System defines health as a complete state of physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease. Thus, the importance of mental health care is evident, particularly when considering factors that directly influence it, such as environmental factors. This study aims to analyze the impact of environmental policies on mental health. It is an integrative literature review, which examined studies published in the last five years across major databases. The analysis revealed that the reduction of urban noise and contact with green spaces have a direct impact on the decrease of mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and stress, leading to the conclusion that encouraging environmental policies is crucial for the preservation of mental health.

Keywords: Environmental policy; mental health; impact..

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health can be defined as a state of well-being that enables individuals to develop their personal abilities in the face of life's challenges. However, mental health cannot be considered an isolated factor, as it is influenced by social, economic, biological, and environmental conditions.

Historically, mental health was not always approached in a humanized manner as it is today. Initially, individuals who deviated from societal norms were considered insane and consequently excluded from social life, often confined in psychiatric hospitals (Freitas, 2018). These institutions did not prioritize patients' well-being, but rather perpetuated mistreatment, neglect, and overcrowding.

This remained the reality until the late 1970s, when the first actions of the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform emerged, introducing a new perspective on patient care and treatment, aiming for social reintegration (Sampaio & Júnior, 2021). This shift fostered the creation of the National Mental Health Policy in 2001, consolidating a humanized model of mental health care. Since then, increasing

strategies have been implemented to improve mental health care for the population.

Considering that environmental conditions have a direct impact on people's psychological well-being, the Ministry of Health emphasizes that healthy and sustainable environments, such as green spaces, are crucial for mental health promotion, making environmental policies essential in reducing the risk of mental disorders. In this context, the present study aims to analyze how environmental policies can affect the mental health of the population.

METHODOLOGY

This is an integrative literature review. A search was conducted in the Virtual Health Library (BVS) and the U.S. National Library of Medicine (PubMed) databases. The research was carried out using the following descriptors: "environmental policy," "mental health," and "impact."

Inclusion criteria: original scientific articles published between 2019 and 2024. Exclusion criteria: literature reviews and studies not directly related to the topic. A total of 669 articles were found in PubMed and 297 in BVS, with 5 articles selected for analysis.

RESULTS

Environmental policies have been, and continue to be, developed to preserve the environment and promote sustainability, including waste management, recycling, and carbon pricing (Smith; Johnson; Wang, 2023). These policies also encompass water resource management, air protection regulations, renewable energy use, and urban planning focused on preserving green areas.

Studies indicate that exposure to green spaces can reduce stress symptoms and their consequences, such as exhaustion and physical fatigue. Recreational walking, social interaction, and the calming atmosphere of such areas positively contribute to mental restoration and physical well-being, thereby

reducing the prevalence of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety (Schaupp et al., 2024).

Other studies have shown that individuals exposed to urban environmental noise, such as traffic, trains, and industry, are more likely to experience poor mental health (Li et al., 2022). Thus, access to calmer and quieter environments, such as green spaces, can positively affect the mental health of urban populations, underscoring the importance of adequate urban planning and environmental preservation.

In addition, temperature variability in cities has been linked to an increase in Major Depressive Disorder and other negative emotions, such as anger, stress, and fatigue (Charlson et al., 2021). These effects also extend to children and adolescents, who, due to prolonged exposure to air pollution, are more susceptible to anxiety and related hospitalizations (Mota-Bertran et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Based on the reviewed studies, it is evident that the environment has a direct influence on mental health, as factors such as air pollution, extreme temperatures, and wildfires have causal links to mental disorders, including depression, anxiety, stress, and fear. Therefore, environmental policies must be increasingly encouraged in order to produce a positive impact on mental health and contribute to the primary prevention of mental disorders.

REFERENCES

1. CHARLSON, F. *et al.* Mudanças climáticas e saúde mental: uma revisão de escopo. **Int J Environ Res Saúde Pública**. 2021. v. 9, n. 18.
2. FREITAS, B. L. A evolução da saúde mental no Brasil: reinserção social. **Revista Científica**. 2018. v. 1
3. LI, A. *et al.* Exposição ao ruído ambiental e saúde mental: evidências de um estudo longitudinal de base populacional. **American Journal of Preventive Medicine**. 2022. v. 63, n. 2, p. 39-48.

4. MOTA-BERTRAN, A. *et all.* Poluição do ar e saúde mental de crianças em áreas rurais: modelo composicional espaço-temporal. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências**. 2024.
5. SAMPAIO, M. L; JÚNIOR, J. P. B. Entre o enclausuramento e a desinstitucionalização: a trajetória da saúde mental no Brasil. **Trabalho Educação e Saúde**. 2021. v. 19, p. 1
6. SCHAUPP J., *et all.* Efeitos psicológicos da caminhada em florestas e ambientes urbanos construídos com diferentes exposições ao ruído do tráfego rodoviário: protocolo de estudo de um ensaio clínico randomizado. **BMC Psicológico**. 2024. v. 1, n.12
7. SMITH, J., JOHNSON, L., WANG, X. Política de gestão de resíduos e sua eficácia na redução da poluição ambiental. **Journal of Environmental Management**. 2023. v. 256, n. 4, p. 1123-1135.