

Mental health & the environment : as related to homelessness

Environmental exposures and depression: (MK)

- There is abundant research focusing on the direct impact of the environment on people's physical health. Focusing on air pollution, for instance, there is a lot of evidence regarding its contribution to physical conditions such as respiratory disease. Even though these conditions would fall technically outside of the scope of this study, they can both directly and indirectly cause various mental disorders. However, the primary impacts of air pollution on physical health will not be the focus of this paper.
- Although this paper has taken a life-course perspective on basic cognitive and social skills needed in each life period, the literature review considers general mental health outcomes and not single neurological or psychiatric mental conditions, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or any specific, disorders and illnesses which the environment might contribute to.

Outdoor air pollution and mental health (MK)

Scientific evidence shows an **emerging association between certain air pollutants and a range of mental health outcomes** including depression, anxiety, psychosis, dementia, childhood cognitive development, and suicide (King, 2018). The present paper focuses on depression and anxiety as outcomes. A review of the literature found that the evidence for associations between air pollution and these mental health outcomes is 'promising but weak, largely due to the positive and negative confounding factors that are challenging to measure and frustrate efforts to identify the true size of the impact' (King, 2018). The evidence ranges from medium to low, setting out a new and promising area of research.

Climate change and mental health (MK)

This section explores the EU relevant aspects of climate change and mental health including sea level rise; need for climate adaptation; heat waves; natural disasters, biodiversity and habitats loss; life impact overall; environmental conditions associated with population displacement and job loss.

- The consequences of **climate change can have a profound impact on mental health** through both its direct impact and its impact on social support systems, cultural traditions and the environmental conditions. Climate change will bring more frequent, long-lasting, and severe adverse weather events, which will likely affect mental health. Berry et al offer an explanatory framework, which may assist in developing public health policy, practice and research (Berry et al, 2010).

Mental Health (MK)

- The ability to process information and make decisions without being disabled by extreme emotional responses is threatened by climate change. Some emotional response is normal, and even negative emotions are a necessary part of fulfilling life. In the extreme case, however, they can interfere with our ability to think rationally, plan our behavior and consider alternative actions.
- An extreme weather event can be a source of trauma, and the experience can cause disabling emotions. More subtle and indirect effects of climate change can add stress to peoples lives in varying degrees. Whether experienced indirectly, or directly, stressors to our climate translate into impaired mental health that can result in depression and anxiety. Although everyone is able to cope with a certain amount of stress, the accumulated effects of compound stress can tip a person from mentally healthy to mentally ill. Even uncertainty can be a source of stress and a risk factor for psychological distress. People can be negatively affected by hearing about the negative experiences of others, and by fears-founded or unfounded-about their own potential vulnerability.
- Mental health: depression, stress and anxiety, strains on social relationships, complicated grief, substance abuse, PTSD, loss of personal identity, helplessness and fatalism.

Strain on social relationships (MK)

- Particularly in home environments, disasters precipitate a set of stressors that can strain interpersonal interactions. A review of research on the impacts of natural disasters identified problems with family and interpersonal relations, as well as social disruption, concerns about wider community, and feelings and obligation to provide support to others. Families whose homes are damaged by a flood, storm, or wildfire may need to be relocated, sometimes multiple times, before settling permanently. Family relationships may suffer. Separation from one another and from their systems of social support may occur. Children may have to attend new schools or miss schools altogether. In addition, even those who are able to remain in their homes may still lose a sense of their home as a safe and secure environment. This has implications for interpersonal connections, as home provides the context for social relationships. When the physical home is damaged, it changes the dynamics of the social relationships, often negatively. Domestic abuse: children abuse, often increases among families who have experienced disasters : such as hurricane katrina or exxon valdez oil spill

Mental health emergencies: there is evidence that increases in mean temperature are associated with increased use of emergency mental health services. Higher temperatures have been linked to increased levels of suicide. It appears that the distress of feeling too hot can overwhelm coping ability for people who are already psychologically fragile. Climate emergencies can also exacerbate pre-existing symptoms and lead to more serious mental health problems.

Loss of personally important places (MK)

- One of the best ways to characterize the impacts of climate change on perception is the sense of loss. Loss of relationship to place is a substantial part of this. As climate change irrevocably changes people's lived landscapes, large numbers are likely to experience a feeling that they are losing a place that is important to them- solastalgia. This psychological phenomenon is characterized by a sense of desolation and loss similar to that experienced by people forced to migrate from their home environment. Solastalgia may have a more gradual beginning due to the slow onset of changes in one's local environment. The emotional pain/disorientation associated with changes in the physical environment that were expressed by residents of a town damaged by tornadoes, even by residents who had not experienced personal loss.
- Loss of place is not a trivial experience. Many people form a strong attachment to the place where they live, finding it to provide a sense of stability, security and personal identity. People who are strongly attached to their local environment report greater happiness, life satisfaction, and optimism. Whereas work performance, interpersonal relationships and physical health can all be negatively impacted by disruption to place attachment.
- Climate change is likely to have a significant effect on human well-being by increasing migration. When people lose their homes to rising sea levels, or when a home becomes unsuitable for human habitation due to its inability to support food groups, they must find another place to live. Almost 200 million people will be displaced due to climate change by 2050.
- Migration in and of itself constitutes a health risk: immigrants are more vulnerable to mental health problems, probably due to the accumulated stressors associated with the move, as well as with the condition of being in exile.
- Being forced to leave one's home territory can threaten one's sense of continuity and belonging. Because of the importance of connection to place in personal identity, such displacement can leave people literally alienated, with a diminished sense of self and increased vulnerability to stress.
- GHANA example: who were forced from the northern region of the country to the capital Accra, because local conditions no longer supported their farming practices. Respondents

expressed nostalgia and sadness from the home left behind and helplessness due to changes in their environments - such as deforestation- were described as sad and scary

Mental health emergencies: (MK)

- Mental health emergencies There is evidence that increases in mean temperature are associated with increased use of emergency mental health services. This is true not only in hot countries, like Israel and Australia, and in parts of the United States but also in relatively cooler countries, such as France and Canada (Vida, Durocher, Ouarda, & Gosselin, 2012). **Higher temperatures have been linked to increased levels of suicide** (Lee et al., 2006). It appears that the distress of feeling too hot can overwhelm coping ability for people who are already psychologically fragile. Climate emergencies can also exacerbate pre existing symptoms and lead to more serious mental health problems.

Loss of autonomy and control (MK)

- Loss of autonomy and control Climate change will intensify certain daily life inconveniences, which can have psychological impacts on individuals' sense of autonomy and control. The desire to be able to accomplish basic tasks independently is a core psychological need, central to human well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2011), and basic services may be threatened due to dangerous conditions. This may make mobility a challenge—particularly for the elderly and those with disabilities. Exposure to unwanted change in one's environment can also reduce one's sense of control over one's life (Fresque-Baxter & Armitage, 2012; Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015), which, in turn, has negative impacts on mental health (Schönfeld, Brailovskaia, Bieda, Zhang, & Margraf, 2016).

Possible questions: Someone come up with questions and speakers response.

Blue: group

Yellow: guest speaker

Introduce ourselves: and our topic we are going to talk about.

(MK) 03/19/22

1. What topic do you plan to cover? We are social work students, looking to do research on environmental justice and its effect on mental health, more specifically we will be talking about the negative effects of the homeless population. We are doing this in regards to a social justice program at Adelphi. Maybe someone can describe what social justice is?
2. We have the pleasure of interviewing with _____. How are you today?
3. Can you describe your job title/how long you have been working there, specific area of expertise?
4. What kind of mental health emergencies have you seen?
 - There is evidence that increases in mean temperature are indicated with increased use of emergency mental health services. This is true not only in hot countries, like Israel and Australia, and in parts of the United States but also in relatively cooler countries, such as France and Canada (Vida, Durocher, Ouarda, & Gosselin, 2012).
 - Higher temperatures have been linked to increased levels of suicide (Lee et al., 2006). It appears that the distress of feeling too hot can overwhelm coping ability for people who are already psychologically fragile. Climate emergencies can also exacerbate pre existing symptoms and lead to more serious mental health problems.
5. Have you seen a loss of autonomy and control with climate change?
 - There has been research that indicates that climate change has been correlated with the ability to interfere with daily life conveniences, which can have severe impacts on individuals' sense of autonomy and control. As humans we want to accomplish basic tasks independently as a psychological core need, which are needed for our well-being. These are challenged during dangerous conditions.
6. Which population is the most vulnerable to loss of autonomy and control?
7. Do you think that this process is a gradual process that occurs in the beginning due to the slow onset of changes in one's environment?
8. Do you think people find a sense of stability, security and personal identity with their homes?

- Research indicates that people who are strongly attached to their local environments are associated with a greater level of happiness, life satisfaction and optimism.
9. Have you seen work performance, interpersonal relationships and physical health being negatively impacted by the disruption of the place of attachment?
 - Climate change is likely to have a significant effect on human well being by increasing migration. When people lose their homes to rising sea levels, or when a home becomes unsuitable for human habitation due to inability to support food groups, they must find another place to live.
 10. What are the types of interventions or practices to reinforce this knowledge in the past?
 11. Do you believe that people of different social class/communities suffer from mental health due to climate change to a different or equal extent? If so, why?

—extra questions if we run out of time —

12. Have you seen strains on personal relationships as related to loss of important personal places?
13. Have you heard of a phenomenon called solastalgia? people experience loss of land, in which they feel that is important to them, also known as solastalgia. Solastalgia is basically this psychological phenomenon that is characterized by a sense of desolation and loss. This process is very similar to when people are forced to migrate from their home environments.

<https://ieep.eu/uploads/articles/attachments/2bfb2051-b305-4338-9770-ae8071320b1a/Mental%20health%20and%20the%20environment.pdf?v=63775265428#:~:text=There%20is%20strong%20evidence%20that,and%20exacerbation%20of%20psychiatric%20problems>

Marie 3/19/2022: Climate change and mental health: time for action and advocacy | Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine | Cambridge Core

“Climate change can affect mental health directly through the effects of extreme weather events such as heat, drought and flooding, and

indirectly through increasing rates of migration and inequality. Vulnerable individuals with neuropsychiatric disorders will be particularly at risk... With climate change and biodiversity loss, pandemics could recur in the future with increasing frequency.”

Question - How are social workers equipped with the emerging numbers of MH disorders due to climate change?

Katia:

- Do you believe that people of different social class/communities suffer from mental health due to climate change to a different or equal extent? If so, why?

Katia Carballo (3/10/22) :

<https://www.breaktime.org/post/how-climate-change-exacerbates-the-homeless-crisis>

Not sure if we are still trying to tie in homelessness and climate change but if so I found this article that ties in both topics ! The article was updated in 2021 so it is fairly new.

“Climate Justice: How Climate Change is Exacerbating the Homelessness Crisis”

The article explains how climate change can come in forms of pollution, heat and diseases and how that all affects homeless people. The article goes in depth to talk about how communities of color and low income communities are severely affected due to climate change because those are the communities that can easily become flooded and wont even have the necessary resources and support when it comes to recovery from any natural disasters. Climate change intersects with housing insecurity, not only harming those already homeless, but also intensifying the causes of homelessness. The

article also discusses some potential solutions our communities and governments can take to both address homelessness and mitigate the effects of climate change on people experiencing homelessness.

KM

Climate change can impact many different groups of people, especially marginalized groups. How could this potentially be harmful for those who live here in New York in regards to their mental health? Could the issues one person may have physically due to climate change in turn affect their mental health?