

A SECOND PANDEMIC: WORSENING OF THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THE BRAZILIAN POPULATION

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Abstract: The covid-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the health of the population, including important consequences for mental health. Allied to this, in the Brazilian scenario, the population was also exposed to one of the most polarized presidential elections in the country, further exacerbating this impact. This article aims to analyze the impact of significant events, mainly the covid-19 pandemic and the 2022 presidential elections, on the mental health of the Brazilian population. A non-systematic review of the literature was carried out based on the themes presented, in order to elaborate a brief discussion on the current panorama of the mental health of the Brazilian population in recent years. As a result, it was found that the rate of mental illness among the Brazilian population had a significant increase, especially after the peak months of the covid-19 pandemic, further aggravated by the political polarization of the 2022 presidential elections. strategies and approaches that can serve as protective factors and improve the mental well-being of the population. The use of apps aimed at self-knowledge and meditation practices improved self-report of depressive symptoms, adjustments to intense routines, resilience and presence in the moment.

Keywords: Pandemic. Mental health. Covid-19. Meditation.

INTRODUCTION

According to an article published on the CNN Brasil network, 1 out of 10 Brazilians reported having received a diagnosis of depression in 2021. In all, they were 11.3% of the Brazilian population, with a higher frequency among women (14.7%) compared to with men (7.3%) (ROCHA, 2022).

The trend is for these numbers to rise even more. According to a report by the World Health Organization published in 2004, official projections indicate that depression will be the

most common disease in the world by 2030. The survey The Global Economic Burden of Noncommunicable Diseases indicates that forecasts show an economic cost of mental illness of more than 15 trillion dollars (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2004).

Allied to this scenario, another significant aggravating factor is the covid-19 pandemic. According to an article published in *Jornal da USP* (2023), searches on Google for information about mental illness have increased by 98% in the last 10 years.

Chagas states that psychological distress during the pandemic was mainly due to the following factors: isolation, lack of food, uncertainties about the future, risk of death, family estrangement, changes in routine, and financial concerns and concerns related to maintaining employment (CHAGAS, 2022).

Another factor that triggers mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, panic and their correlates is the intensity of polarized political discussions.

In research published by the authors Jucier Gonçalves Júnior, Liromaria Maria de Amorim, Athena de Albuquerque Farias and Modesto Leite Rolim-Neto, the authors state that there is an exacerbation of mental illness during significantly competitive and aggressive elections (GONÇALVES-JÚNIOR; AMORIM; FARIAS; ROLIM-NETO, 2019).

In addition, the authors also report that there is an increase in the feeling of fear, insecurity and sadness, which negatively impact the mental health of the population. Finally, the suffocation of social relationships due to the polarization process also prevents socialization with people in common contact and limits the support network of individuals.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this work is to analyze the impact of significant events, mainly the covid-19 pandemic and the 2022 presidential elections, on the mental health of the Brazilian population.

METHOD

A non-systematic review of the literature was carried out based on the themes presented, in order to elaborate a brief discussion on the current panorama of the mental health of the Brazilian population in recent years (HUELIN, 2015).

RESULTS

Research published in recent months shows that the rate of mental illness among the Brazilian population has increased significantly, especially after the peak months of the covid-19 pandemic, further aggravated by the political polarization of the 2022 presidential elections.

CONCLUSIONS

It is necessary to think about strategies and approaches that can serve as protective factors and improve the mental well-being of the population. Among them, electronic applications aimed at contemplative and complementary practices, such as meditation, stand out.

Research carried out by researchers at the University of Otago, in New Zealand, demonstrates that the use of applications aimed at self-awareness and meditation practices improved self-reported depressive symptoms, adjustments to intense routines, resilience and presence in the moment (FLETT; HAYNE; RIORDAN, 2019).

However, the importance of in-depth research that addresses protective measures aimed at the psychological distress of the Brazilian population in the coming years is highlighted.

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