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Mental Illness, Raciality and Intersectionality: an Analytical Study

Doença Mental, Racialidade e Interseccionalidade: um estudo analítico

Maladie mentale, racialité et intersectionnalité: une étude analytique

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Abstract

Mental health is a fundamental right for all, and we must fight for this right to be respected and guaranteed to each individual, without exception. The study aims to present and highlight the importance of the intersectional approach in the relationship

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between mental illness and raciality. It is a theoretical contribution, of a qualitative nature. The concepts related to the issue of intersectionalities present in the daily experience of mental health in racialized people are presented. It is concluded that it was possible to identify that the relationship between mental illness, raciality and intersectionality presents significant challenges, including stigmas, barriers to access, and the need for culturally competent approaches. The in-depth study of the perceptions and experiences of racialized individuals in relation to mental health also emerged as a relevant point for understanding and acting in this field. These aspects highlight the importance of considering racial and gender diversity in the formulation of mental health policies and practices.

Keywords: Mental illness; raciality; intersectionality; social commitment.

Resumo

A saúde mental é um direito fundamental de todos, e devemos lutar para que esse direito seja respeitado e garantido a cada indivíduo, sem exceção. O estudo tem como objetivo apresentar e destacar a importância da abordagem interseccional na relação entre doença mental e racialidade. É um aporte teórico, de cunho qualitativo. São apresentadas as concepções relativas à questão das interseccionalidades presentes na vivência cotidiana da saúde mental em pessoas racializadas. Conclui-se que foi possível identificar que a relação entre doença mental, racialidade e interseccionalidade apresenta desafios significativos, incluindo estigmas, barreiras de acesso, e a necessidade de abordagens culturalmente competentes. O aprofundamento sobre as percepções e vivências de indivíduos racializadas em relação à saúde mental também emergiu como um ponto relevante para a compreensão e atuação nesse campo. Esses aspectos ressaltam a importância de considerar a diversidade racial e de gênero na formulação de políticas e práticas de saúde mental.

Palavras-chave: Doença mental; racialidade; interseccionalidade; compromisso social

Résumé

La santé mentale est un droit fondamental pour chacun, et nous devons lutter pour que ce droit soit respecté et garanti à chaque individu, sans exception. L'étude vise à présenter et souligner l'importance de l'approche intersectionnelle dans la relation entre maladie mentale et racialité. Il s'agit d'une contribution théorique, de nature qualitative. Des conceptions liées à la problématique des intersectionnalités présentes dans l'expérience quotidienne de la santé mentale des personnes racisées sont présentées. Nous concluons qu'il a été possible d'identifier que la relation entre la maladie mentale, la race et l'intersectionnalité présente des défis importants, notamment des stigmates, des obstacles à l'accès et la nécessité d'approches culturellement compétentes. L'approfondissement des perceptions et des expériences des personnes racisées en matière de santé mentale est également apparu comme



un point pertinent pour comprendre et agir dans ce domaine. Ces aspects soulignent l'importance de prendre en compte la diversité raciale et de genre lors de la formulation de politiques et de pratiques en matière de santé mentale.

Mots-clés: Maladie mentale; la race; l'intersectionnalité; engagement social

The study aims to present and highlight the importance of the intersectional approach in the relationship between mental illness and raciality. In this way, it seeks to contextualize and highlight the relevance of the topic in contemporary times, reinforcing the need to understand the diverse experiences lived by racialized people in the context of mental health.

It is essential to understand the intersection between heterogeneous identity dimensions, such as race, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation and physical disabilities, in an attempt to promote, foster and generate a comprehensive analysis, based on relevant foundations, that are truly capable of stimulating reflection, awareness and the necessary transformation in the field of mental health (Barbosa-Fohrmann & Martins, 2021).

Understanding mental health in its complexity and scope is an invaluable challenge, but indispensable for the advancement of society towards a more inclusive and equitable perspective, capable of meeting the needs of all individuals. Therefore, it is essential to recognize and address the intersections between the different forms of oppression and stigmatization faced by marginalized groups, as this intersectional understanding is the foundation for promoting collective and quality mental health for all (Meira et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024; Viana et al. 2020).

In addition, it is important to highlight the importance of creating public policies that consider different identities in a comprehensive manner, promoting equal access to mental health services and ensuring fair treatment free from discrimination. The pursuit of equity in mental health requires continuous efforts, recognizing the structural and social causes that contribute to inequalities and dedicating ourselves to transforming these situations to improve the lives of those affected (Tenório, 2021).

Therefore, it is essential to prioritize research and dialogue that encompass the multiple facets of mental health, giving voice to the experiences and perspectives of



historically marginalized groups, with a view to building a more inclusive, empathetic, and healthy society for all (Almeida et al., 2022). We believe that only through these actions can we truly aim for a future in which each individual is treated with dignity, respect, and equal opportunities in the field of mental health. Therefore, it is essential that professionals in this area broaden their horizons and improve their understanding of the intersections between mental illness and raciality, in order to offer adequate and effective support to all people, regardless of their cultural heritage, skin color, or ethnic origin (Meira et al., 2024; Matos & Albuquerque, 2023).

As a society, we have a responsibility to address the systemic and structural injustices that perpetuate inequality in access to mental health services, promoting real and lasting change in our institutions and in the way we approach the topic in our daily lives. We must be willing to acknowledge our biases and privileges, and make a concrete commitment to actively work to eliminate the barriers that impede equitable access to mental health (Meira et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024; Carvalho et al., 2020). By doing so, we will be moving towards a more just, inclusive and compassionate society, in which mental health is treated as a fundamental and inalienable human right, ensuring that all people have access to and adequate support to care for their mental health (Xavier, 2021).

Therefore, it is essential that experts and professionals in the field are willing to confront their own biases and stereotypes, acquiring deeper knowledge about the complex intersections and interdependencies between mental illness and race. Only then will we be able to develop holistic and inclusive approaches that meet the specific demands and needs of each individual, regardless of their cultural background, skin color, or ethnic origin (Costa & Santos, 2021).

In the context of public policies, it is essential that there is a commitment to promoting equal access to mental health services, ensuring that all people have the opportunity to seek and receive adequate support, free from discrimination and stigma. To this end, it is essential to recognize the intersections between mental illness and racial issues, developing effective strategies that take into account the experiences and perspectives of historically marginalized groups (Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes, 2024; Dias, 2024). In addition, it is necessary to invest in education and awareness of society as a whole, so that people understand the importance of addressing mental



health in a comprehensive and inclusive manner. This involves deconstructing stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination that affect the lives of racialized people, contributing to the creation of a healthier and more welcoming environment for everyone (Matos & Albuquerque, 2023).

The journey towards a more just and egalitarian society in the area of mental health is long, but it cannot be postponed. It is up to each of us, as members of this society, to assume the responsibility and action necessary to promote significant and lasting changes. Only then will we be able to rebuild the foundations of the mental health system, making it truly inclusive, accessible, and effective for all people, regardless of their race, ethnic origin, or any other identity dimension (Zatera et al., 2021).

Mental health is a fundamental right for everyone, and we must fight for this right to be respected and guaranteed to each individual, without exception. Together, we can build a future in which mental health is treated with the importance and care it deserves, contributing to the well-being of the entire society.

1. Basic Definitions and Contextualization

It is necessary to consider and emphasize the existing disparities in access to health resources and services, and, in this way, seek a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the implications of such inequalities. In this case, we need to delve into the social, historical, and cultural factors that shape and impact the mental health of racialized people, at which point the importance of an intersectional analysis that takes into account the interaction between race, gender, social class, and other forms of marginalization and oppression is highlighted (Santos et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024).

Only through a critical and reflective analysis will we be able to examine the power structures that perpetuate racial disparities in mental health, as well as the forms of resistance and struggle that have been developed by racialized communities in search of equity in the provision of mental health care (Andrade & Alves, 2024; Souza & Borba, 2024).

It is essential to observe the empirical and theoretical evidence that supports these discussions, providing a solid basis for a deeper and more contextualized



understanding of the issues presented here. There is no doubt that we must emphasize the importance of a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to address the challenges faced by racialized people in relation to their mental health (Ferraz, 2024).

Therefore, it is essential to highlight that the main objective of this study is to provide a solid and comprehensive basis for understanding the concepts of mental illness, raciality and intersectionality, as well as to analyze the social and structural dynamics that affect the mental health of racialized people (Fonseca, 2024; Gresta, 2024). From this basis, we explored the related themes in more depth throughout the study, allowing a critical analysis of the issues under analysis.

The objectives of this study are to analyze the intersectionality of experiences of mental illness and raciality, identify the challenges faced by racialized people in the context of mental health and propose interventions that are sensitive to race issues. The justification for carrying out this study lies in the need to broaden the debate on mental health in order to consider multiple identity dimensions and promote more inclusive and equitable practices.

2. Mental Illness: Concepts and Prevalence

Mental illness refers to a wide range of conditions that affect the mood, thinking, and behavior of individuals, leading to significant changes in their daily functioning and social interactions (Trevisan & Souza Castro, 2021).

The prevalence of mental illness in the general population is high, with millions of people worldwide suffering from depression, anxiety, eating disorders, schizophrenia, and other conditions (Alves, 2021). These illnesses can negatively impact quality of life and represent a significant burden on health systems (Vitorino et al., 2024).

Mental illnesses can vary in severity and symptoms, from mild cases of persistent sadness to more serious conditions that require intensive treatment. They affect people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, and cultures, and do not distinguish between genders (Trevisan & Souza Castro, 2021).

Understanding and treating mental illnesses appropriately is essential to improving the quality of life of affected individuals and reducing the negative impact on society as a whole (Aguar Magalhães et al., 2024). The nature of mental illnesses can



be complex and multifaceted. Genetic, chemical, and environmental factors can play an important role in the development and progression of these conditions (Ferreira et al., 2023).

In addition, traumatic experiences such as childhood abuse, loss of loved ones, and chronic stress can increase the risk of developing mental illnesses. It is important to emphasize that mental illness is not the result of personal weakness or lack of character (Nascimento & Santos, 2023). It is a health issue that requires appropriate medical attention and ongoing support. The stigma associated with mental illnesses still persists in many societies, making it difficult to seek help and access treatment.

It is essential to promote awareness and education to end this stigma and ensure that those suffering from mental illnesses receive the support and treatment they need. There are different treatment approaches for mental illness, which can include therapy, medication, and healthy lifestyle choices (Oliveira, 2023). It is important that each individual receives a personalized treatment plan based on their specific condition and needs. Furthermore, support from family, friends, and community plays a crucial role in the recovery and management of mental illness (Vidal et al., 2022).

It is essential to raise awareness in society about the importance of mental health and to seek professional help if you are facing any kind of problem. Mental illness should not be neglected, as it can have profound impacts on a person's life. With proper treatment, it is possible to regain mental well-being and live a full and meaningful life (Mota, Silva & Amorim, 2020). It is time to break the stigma and support each other on our journey to mental health.

2.1 Definition of Mental Illness

The definition of mental illness encompasses a broad range of clinical conditions that affect an individual's psychological and emotional functioning, which can lead to intense mental distress and significant impairment of daily activities. These conditions include mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders such as panic disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia, eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa,



personality disorders such as borderline personality disorder and narcissistic disorder, among many others (Souza, 2023).

It is crucial to recognize that mental illness is in no way caused by weakness of character, lack of willpower, or personal failure. Rather, it is the result of a complex combination of several factors, including biological, genetic, psychological, social, and environmental factors. Scientific studies have shown that changes in brain neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and dopamine, play a significant role in the development and manifestation of mental illnesses (Feliciano & Costa, 2024; Schlosser et al., 2023; Gomes et al., 2022).

In addition, family history and traumatic events can also influence the predisposition and triggering of these conditions. Therefore, it is essential to combat the stigma associated with mental illnesses and promote the understanding that they are legitimate illnesses, which deserve to be treated with respect and compassion (Fernandes et al., 2024; Schimingoski et al., 2024).

Access to effective treatments, such as psychological therapy, appropriate medication and social support, is essential for the recovery and improvement of the quality of life of people facing these challenges. Understanding the complexity of these conditions and offering support and understanding to those affected is a crucial step towards building a more inclusive and healthy society.

2.2 Prevalence of Mental Illness in the General Population

The prevalence of mental illness in the general population is a global phenomenon that affects people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, and social classes. It is estimated that approximately 20% of adults will experience a mental health problem in a given year (Brandalise et al., 2022). Furthermore, the incidence of mental illness is increasing rapidly, which is having a significant impact on health systems and social welfare policies worldwide (Waisberg & Silva, 2022).

The negative effects of these illnesses extend far beyond the individual affected, also affecting their family members, friends, and the community as a whole. The lack of awareness and adequate resources further exacerbates the situation, making these illnesses an even greater challenge to address and overcome (Oliveira et al., 2022). However, it is crucial that governments, health institutions, and society at large come



together to tackle this problem head on and prioritize the care and support of people suffering from mental illness. To achieve this, it is necessary to implement large-scale awareness campaigns, make access to mental health services easier and more accessible, provide education on the early signs and symptoms of these illnesses, and reduce the stigma surrounding them (Freitas & Carneiro, 2023).

It is essential to provide adequate resources for treatment, including therapies, medications, and other necessary support. Only in this way can we achieve a healthier and more inclusive society that values and respects the mental health of all its members, and that actively works to provide a welcoming environment and the necessary support for those who need it (Lopes et al, 2022).

It is irrefutable that mental health plays a fundamental role in people's overall well-being and quality of life. Therefore, it is essential that all stakeholders recognize the importance of addressing these issues and develop effective strategies to ensure that everyone has access to adequate mental health care (Siqueira et al., 2023). By expanding our efforts to raise awareness and provide resources, we can mitigate the devastating impact of mental illness and work toward a society where mental health is truly valued and understood. Together, we can drive change and break down the barriers that hinder the proper diagnosis and treatment of mental illness (Mota et al., 2021).

By providing accessible care, emotional support, and prevention programs, we can improve not only individual health but also social cohesion and overall quality of life. The battle against mental illness is a collective responsibility and requires continued efforts to combat stigma, raise awareness, and ensure universal access to mental health services (Santos et al., 2024). With determination and collaboration, we can build a future in which mental health is treated with the same importance and priority as physical health. Everyone has the right to pursue happiness, well-being and a full life, free from the constraints of mental suffering (Araújo Barbosa & Carvalho Teixeira, 2021). Together, we can achieve this vision and create a more humane, inclusive and caring society for all.

3. Raciality and Mental Health

The relationship between raciality and mental health dates back to centuries of systematic oppression, segregation, and racial discrimination, which have a direct and



negative impact on the psychological well-being of racialized individuals (Bú et al., 2024; Barbosa, 2022). The history of this intricate relationship is characterized by countless cases of stigmatization, marginalization, and social exclusion, which significantly contributes to the high prevalence of mental illness within this population group Santos et al., 2024; Martins, 2023; Oliveira, 20230. It is extremely important to deeply understand this intricate history in order to develop and implement effective strategies to promote equitable and inclusive mental health for all.

3.1 History of the Relationship between Race and Mental Health

The history of the relationship between race and mental health deserves to be widely explored and understood, as it is intrinsically linked to the marginalization of racialized people and the neglect of their experiences of psychological suffering. Over the centuries, from the times of slavery to the practices of racial segregation, these communities have faced collective traumas and extreme structural inequalities, which have had a significant impact on the incidence of mental illness among them (Silva, 2023).

It is important to recognize and deeply investigate these historical aspects, as they provide a crucial context for analyzing the current challenges faced by racialized communities in relation to their mental health and psychological well-being. Furthermore, understanding this complex relationship allows us to glimpse the need for public policies and affirmative actions aimed at promoting the mental health of these communities more effectively (Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes, 2024; Gomes, 2022).

In this sense, it is essential to highlight that the consequences of prolonged racial oppression are not limited to individual psychological dimensions. They also extend to the social and institutional contexts in which these communities are inserted. The lack of adequate representation and policies for equal access to mental health services contributes to the perpetuation of the problems faced by racialized people (Carvalho & Figueiredo, 2024).

In addition, restrictions on financial resources and continued exposure to environments of violence and discrimination are additional factors that exacerbate the negative effects on the mental health of these communities. By examining the stories of racialized people, we can observe how intersectionality plays a crucial role in



understanding their mental health. Women, in particular, have faced unique challenges due to the interaction of racism and sexism. The amplification of negative stereotypes and the double discrimination they face create an additional burden of stress and negatively affect their mental health. Therefore, it is essential that policies and research related to mental health address these issues with a focus on intersectional experiences (Albuquerque & Diniz, 2022).

Furthermore, it is essential that the mental health of racialized people be treated holistically. This means that the clinical approach cannot be separated from the social and historical context. The promotion of culturally sensitive therapeutic interventions and the creation of support spaces that value the experiences and knowledge of racialized communities are urgent needs (Silva, 2023; Gomes, 2022).

The creation of inclusive care programs that take into account cultural specificities and include the participation of professionals from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds is an important step towards ensuring equitable and effective mental health (Albuquerque & Diniz, 2022). Thus, the history of the relationship between raciality and mental health is complex and fraught with challenges. It is necessary to expand knowledge and understanding of these aspects to combat the marginalization and neglect faced by racialized communities. Through an intersectional and holistic approach, we can work towards more inclusive policies and practices that value the mental health of everyone, regardless of their racial identity (Cardim, 2021). Only then can we move towards a society in which mental health equity is a reality for everyone.

3.2 Social and Structural Factors Impacting the Mental Health of People of Color

The social and structural factors that impact the mental health of people of color are extremely complex and intricate, with a wide range of influences and ramifications.

Institutionalized racism, unrelenting discrimination, widespread poverty, a severe lack of access to quality health services, and insidious violence are just a few examples of the many interconnected determinants that contribute to the alarming and disproportionate rates of mental illness faced by this particular community (Alves, 2023).



Understanding and comprehensively addressing these factors is absolutely essential to advancing equity in mental health while developing effective, holistic, and culturally sensitive interventions that can reduce the shocking racial disparities that exist in this crucial field. It is imperative to recognize that mental health cannot be addressed in isolation, but rather as a direct reflection of an intricate and interconnected matrix of social, economic, and historical issues (Farias Falcke & Serralta, 2024; Cardim, 2021).

It is understood that only through an integrated and collaborative approach can we advance in the search for tangible and sustainable solutions that lead to a more just and equitable society in terms of mental health for all people, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

As we invest time, resources, and energy in these efforts, it is crucial to involve a variety of stakeholders, including racialized individuals themselves, in order to ensure that their voices are heard and their experiences are taken into account (Avelar, Figueiredo & Malta., 2022).

We believe it is essential to promote education and develop outreach programs that address not only the structural barriers that limit access to mental health care, but also the stigmas and biases surrounding mental health in communities of color. We must work together to increase accessibility to mental health services, as well as invest in research to further increase our understanding of the factors underlying mental distress in this population (Bones & Bellenzani, 2024). Through an evidence-based approach, solidarity, and collaboration, we can hope to achieve significant improvements in the mental health of people of color, providing them with the support and resources they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives (Goulart & Nardi, 2022). It is essential to ensure that all aspects of life are considered, from education to employment, the physical environment, and public policy. By doing so, we can not only improve the mental health of this community, but also create a more inclusive, welcoming, and just society for all. The journey to mental health equity is long, but it is a goal we must relentlessly pursue. We understand that determination and commitment are fundamental factors for this to happen and, from there, we can overcome challenges and build a future where all people have equal access to quality mental health.



4. Intersectionality: Understanding the Complexity of Identities

Intersectionality is a deep and complex theoretical approach that recognizes and values the interconnection and interdependence of various forms of oppression and privilege that exist in our society. This inclusive and critical perspective, by analyzing the dimensions of race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and many others, seeks to understand the multiplicity of individual and collective identities (Collins, 2022).

Through intersectionality, it is possible to see and analyze the complexity of personal and collective experiences, going beyond a one-dimensional view that reduces people to just one characteristic or identity. This broad and inclusive approach shows that no one is just black, just a woman, just poor, or just LGBTQ+, but rather a unique mix of all these dimensions and more (Meira et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024; Laisner, 2023).

When we delve deeper into the intersectional perspective, it becomes clear how different forms of discrimination and privilege intertwine and influence each other. For example, a black person may face not only structural racism, but also sexism and homophobia. This intersection of oppressions creates unique and complex life experiences that cannot be understood in isolation (Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes, 2024; Hayashi & Rigolin, 2024).

In the context of mental health, intersectionality offers a more comprehensive and in-depth perspective to understand the experiences of racialized people (Gois & Santos, 2024). It allows us to examine how racism, combined with other forms of oppression, affects the mental health of these individuals. By recognizing and analyzing these interconnections, it is possible to develop more effective and inclusive interventions that address the various challenges faced by racialized people in an integrated manner (Santos, 2024; Gomes da Silva, 2024).

Therefore, it is up to all of society to recognize that it is essential to promote the adoption of intersectionality as an essential approach in all aspects of our society and the field of mental health. Only through it will we be able to fully recognize the complexity of the experiences lived by racialized people, as well as effectively confront



and combat the various forms of discrimination and oppression that persist in our society.

4.1 Origins and Fundamental Concepts

Intersectional theory, which originated in feminist and critical race studies, highlights and underscores the vital and crucial need to consider, in an absolutely fundamental way, the multiple intersections of oppressions faced by people. This extremely significant theory, of paramount importance and of undeniable relevance, is based on the deep, deep understanding that individual experiences, and here it is important to emphasize the experiences of each individual in particular, are intensely and profoundly shaped, affected and shaped by a multitude of complex and interrelated factors, such as race, gender, social class and other identities, just to name a few examples, of course. And it is precisely because of all these interdependent and intertwined elements that this exceptionally important, critical and significant approach deserves all our attention and attention. After all, it is through this perspective that we are able to recognize and understand, in a more comprehensive way, all the different forms of power and privilege that exert a direct and undeniable influence on the mental health of each individual, and that is no small feat, my friends (Collins, 2022; 2024).

It is this deeper understanding and recognition that allows us to see all the nuances and subtleties, all the submerged and hidden layers of the inequalities experienced by our contemporary society. Yes, this exceptionally important and significant approach gives us an even more complete, even more panoramic view of the complexity and urgency of the inequalities that permeate and intensely permeate our existence as members of this incredibly plural society that we call our home. With this enriching perspective, we are indeed capable of promoting and driving social transformations, and we are not just talking about cosmetic, superficial and merely aesthetic changes, but rather about deep, solid and true transformations, capable of creating a more inclusive, fairer, more compassionate future for all people, yes, everyone, without exception, without leaving anyone out, without marginalizing, excluding or perpetuating historical and structural oppressions (Silva & Oliveira Souza, 2024).



Therefore, let us have no doubt that it is through a deep and careful intersectional perspective that we will, in fact, be able to build and achieve a better future, a more humane, more egalitarian and more welcoming future for all of us, without exception. This is what is at stake here, this is what is at stake, and we must embrace this perspective with all our being, with all our strength and with unwavering determination. It is not just about pretty words or abstract theory, but rather a tangible and concrete reality that manifests itself in the lives of millions and millions of individuals around the world (Mazzucatto, 2023).

In this way, we understand that the future awaits us, and it is up to each of us, collectively and individually, to create a future of true inclusion, equality and justice for all people, today and always. Together, we can make a difference and shape a better world for future generations. However, we must keep in mind that this task will not be easy, requiring constant effort and tireless commitment. Therefore, it is essential that we continue to work together to overcome the challenges that will inevitably arise along the way. We may face resistance and opposition, but with perseverance and solidarity, we can overcome any obstacle in our path (Silva & Oliveira Souza, 2024).

This study adopts the perspective that each individual has a crucial role to play in achieving a more egalitarian world. We also recognize that intersectionality is not limited to academic theory, but rather a powerful tool for action and social change. As we move forward, we must bring the principles of intersectionality to bear in our activism, advocacy, and daily struggles for human rights and justice.

We emphasize that by recognizing and valuing the diverse experiences and identities that make up our society, we can work together to build a world where everyone can thrive and be free to be themselves, without fear of discrimination or oppression. This requires a holistic and inclusive approach that considers all forms of oppression and prioritizes equity and justice.

In this process, it is essential that we also examine our own privileges and responsibilities, recognizing the role each of us plays in maintaining or transforming unequal power structures. With commitment and collective action, we can create a world where all voices are heard and all struggles are validated. Together, we can face challenges with courage and perseverance, overcoming the barriers that stand in our way. Only by doing so can we achieve our goals and achieve our goals. Only by



working together, in solidarity with one another, can we achieve true equality of opportunity and a just and inclusive society. The path may not be easy, but it is our duty to fight for the rights of all and challenge the power structures that perpetuate inequality (Mazzucatto, 2023).

Move forward with confidence and determination, always remembering the fundamental and enduring importance of intersectional theory. The future is in our hands and with our collective strength, we can shape it to be more just, more compassionate and more equal. Together, we can make a difference in the pursuit of a world where everyone is valued, regardless of their race, gender, social class or any other identity. In this ongoing effort, we must remain united and face challenges with resilience, commitment and determination. Building a better world is a shared responsibility for all of us, and it is through intersectional theory and its practical application that we can achieve a more inclusive and equitable future for all (Collins, 2024).

4.2 Applications of Intersectional Theory in Mental Health

The application of intersectional theory in mental health involves considering broadly how the intersections of race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion and other identities influence in a complex and multifaceted way not only access to mental health services, diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses, but also the social determinants of mental health that permeate all spheres of people's lives (Meira et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024).

Intersectional theory highlights the pressing need for more sensitive, inclusive and culturally competent approaches in clinical practice. This means taking into account the diverse experiences and experiences of people of color, belonging to the LGBTQIA+ communities, with physical or cognitive disabilities, elderly people, with different religious beliefs, as well as the structural and social barriers they face in the health system (Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes, 2024).

It should be emphasized that the fundamental characteristic of this perspective must, peremptorily, be comprehensive and contextualized, and, therefore, it must encompass not only individual issues, but also collective and structural issues,



becoming fundamental to guarantee equitable and quality mental health for all (Meira et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024).

. By recognizing and valuing the uniqueness of each individual, and at the same time combating the inequalities and injustices present in the health system, it is possible to build an equitable society, where everyone has equal opportunities to take care of their mental health (Ferreira & Castro, 2024; Oliveira, 2024; Gonzalez, 2023; Casimiro, 2021).

5. Mental Illness and Racial Intersectionality

Racial intersectionality in mental health is an extremely complex and important topic, as the interaction between race and mental health can cause a series of unique challenges that affect both the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses in racialized people. It is essential that health professionals adopt a sensitive and culturally competent approach, taking into account all the particularities and specific needs of these patients (Oliveira, 2024; Sapatini et al. 2024).

In addition, it is necessary to promote equal access to mental health services, ensuring that all people, regardless of their race, have access to an accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment for their mental illnesses. We must recognize and combat the structural racism that permeates the health system, aiming to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all people seeking help. This includes implementing policies and practices that directly address the inequalities and marginalization faced by racialized communities (Diehl, 2024; Sousa, 2023; Miranda et al., 2021).

Healthcare institutions should invest in training for their professionals to raise awareness of issues related to racial intersectionality in mental health. In addition, it is important to promote representation in mental health areas, ensuring that the voices of racialized people are heard and taken into account in policies and decisions that affect care and access to health services. This includes diversifying health care teams to reflect the reality and needs of the communities they serve (Cruz & Ienk, 2024; Gimenez et al., 2023; Brandão & Cabral, 2021).

. To effectively address racial intersectionality in mental illness, it is also necessary to address the deep-rooted stereotypes and biases that can lead to neglect



or undertreatment of people of color. This involves ongoing education of health professionals to ensure that they have a better understanding of the complexities of mental health in racialized communities (Meira et al., 2024). For Dehl (2024), we must work together to create a more equitable and inclusive society in which racial intersectionality in mental illness is recognized and effectively addressed. This requires the collaboration of health institutions, professionals, communities, and individuals, all committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to achieve full mental health and emotional well-being, regardless of their race or background.

5.1 Challenges in Diagnosing and Treating Mental Illness in Individuals of Color

Individuals of color face numerous unique challenges and difficulties when it comes to diagnosing and treating mental illnesses. It is important to highlight that these challenges should not be underestimated, as they can have a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of these individuals (Meira et al., 2024).

One of the main obstacles faced by individuals of color is the constant presence of stigma and prejudice. They are often victims of discrimination and lack of understanding on the part of health professionals, which makes the process of diagnosis and appropriate treatment even more difficult (Bú et al., 2024).

In addition, cultural and language barriers also play a crucial role in effective communication between patients and health care providers. Lack of knowledge about different cultures and lack of fluency in different languages can make it difficult to obtain accurate information and understand each other (Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes, 2024).

For Oliveira (2024), these challenges can lead to inaccurate diagnoses and inadequate treatment plans, which in turn result in a worsening of the mental and general health of racialized individuals. This lack of understanding and access to adequate mental health services can further exacerbate the inequalities that already exist in our health system (Santos & Pimenta, 2024).

In light of this scenario, it is essential to promote greater awareness and sensitivity regarding the specific needs of racialized populations (Gonçalves, 2023). This includes educating health professionals on cultural issues, promoting diversity in



mental health services, and creating welcoming and culturally sensitive environments for these individuals (Oliveira, 2024).

As Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes (2024) assume, ensuring equitable access to adequate and culturally sensitive mental health services is a fundamental step in the fight against existing inequalities and injustices. All individuals, regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, have the right to receive fair and effective treatment for their mental health conditions (Abreu & Silva, 2024).

Therefore, in our view, it is essential to invest in initiatives that aim to make mental health services more inclusive, providing a safe and stigma-free environment for everyone. Only through a joint effort and a racially and ethnically sensitive approach can we work to overcome these inequalities and ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to achieve adequate mental health and a full life.

5.2 Stigmas and Barriers to Access to Mental Health Services

Deeply rooted social stigmas and numerous structural barriers that hinder equitable access to essential mental health services undoubtedly represent a formidable obstacle for those who belong to racialized groups or ethnic minorities. In this context, the glaring lack of representation and cultural sensitivity in mental health institutions and professionals ends up generating profound discouragement and reluctance on the part of these individuals when it comes to seeking help for their psychological anguish and distress. This reluctance, in turn, leads to regrettable consequences, such as underdiagnosis and, consequently, undertreatment of the mental illnesses that afflict this vulnerable population (Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes, 2024; Meira et al., 2024).

.The studies by Costa et al., (2024) and Barbosa (2023) show us that it is crucial, therefore, to recognize the imperative need to promote significant changes in our society in order to overcome such obstacles and ensure more equitable access to mental health services. This requires a joint effort, involving not only the training and awareness of mental health professionals, but also the implementation of effective public policies that adequately address the specific demands of these marginalized groups.



In view of this, we must actively seek to diversify mental health professionals, thus ensuring broader representation and a deeper understanding of each individual's cultural and social experiences. This diversification would not only help to reduce the stigma associated with seeking psychological help, but would also promote greater confidence and comfort on the part of those seeking treatment (Campelo et al., 2024; Bailo et al., 2024). Another aspect that we consider important is the development of culturally sensitive mental health policies that take into account the different belief systems, values, and practices of each community. This includes adapting mental health services to meet the specific needs of each ethnic or racialized group, as well as promoting awareness and education about mental health in these communities (Teixeira, 2024; Vieira, Souza & Bermudez, 2024).

Therefore, in our view, overcoming stigmas and structural barriers to access to mental health requires a multidimensional and systematic approach that involves changes in both public policies and the mindset of society as a whole (Nunes & Nascimento, 2024; Amorim & Elbacha, 2024). Only then can we ensure that everyone has adequate access to essential mental health services, regardless of their ethnic or racial origin.

5.3 Race-Sensitive Interventions and Practices in Mental Health

Race-sensitive interventions and practices in mental health seek to promote equity and accessibility to mental health services for racialized populations. This includes incorporating culturally competent approaches that consider the diversity of experiences and cultural values of the communities served, ensuring more effective and appropriate care (Ferreira et al., 2024; Lima et al., 2023). In addition, the implementation of public policies and community initiatives aimed at the mental health of racialized populations is essential to combat stigma, reduce disparities in access to health services, and promote social inclusion and equal opportunities (Gomes, 2024; Bú et al., 2024).

The practice of addressing mental health in a race-sensitive manner is an ongoing effort in the pursuit of equity and justice. It is necessary to recognize that racialized populations face unique challenges in accessing mental health services, due to systematic discrimination and oppression. Therefore, it is essential to implement



interventions and policies that consider these issues in order to provide fair and quality care to all (Freires et al., 2023).

An effective way to promote equity is through the incorporation of culturally competent approaches. This involves recognizing and valuing the diverse cultural experiences and values of the communities served. By considering the specificities of each racialized group, we can ensure that mental health services are more relevant, effective, and accessible (Araujo, 2024; Oliveira, 2024).

It is essential that health professionals are prepared to meet the specific needs and demands of each community, cultivating a relationship of trust and mutual understanding. Furthermore, it is essential to implement public policies and community initiatives aimed at the mental health of racialized populations. These actions require the active engagement of governments, civil society organizations, and the community in general (Gonçalves, 2023).

It is necessary to combat stigmas, prejudices, and racial discrimination, promoting a more inclusive and egalitarian society. By creating equal opportunities for access to mental health services and investing in prevention, treatment, and support programs, we can ensure that everyone has the chance to achieve their emotional and mental well-being (Hayashi & Rigolin, 2024).

It is understood that interventions and practices that are sensitive to issues of race and mental health are essential to promote equity and accessibility to health services. Through these actions, public policies and community initiatives, it will be possible to reduce disparities and ensure that all populations, regardless of their race, have access to adequate and effective care. As Meira et al., (2024) and Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes (2024) tell us, Mental health is a fundamental human right and must be guaranteed to everyone, without discrimination or exclusion.

6. Culturally competent approaches, what would that be?

Culturally competent approaches are extremely important and fundamental for promoting the mental health of racialized populations. These approaches recognize and fully value the cultural diversity, beliefs, practices and traditions of the communities served. This necessarily implies hiring and training mental health professionals who represent different ethnic and cultural groups, as well as adapting services and



interventions to specifically meet the needs of each community (Meira et al., 2024; Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes (2024).

The efficient and effective implementation of these approaches promotes an extremely welcoming and inclusive therapeutic environment, free from any form of prejudice or discrimination. This environment, in turn, contributes significantly to promoting mental health, improving overall well-being and the quality of life of racialized populations (Damasceno, 2021). By adopting these approaches, it is possible to establish a relationship of trust and empathy between health professionals and the communities they serve. This allows for a broader and deeper understanding of the challenges and difficulties faced by each group, resulting in appropriate and personalized interventions (Bú et al., 2024; Lima, Gussi & Araújo, 2024).

Furthermore, through culturally competent approaches, it is possible to strengthen the identity and self-esteem of racialized populations, valuing their traditional knowledge and providing a space for them to express their opinions and needs in a safe and respectful manner (Farias et al., 2024; Oliveira, 2024). Thus, the implementation of culturally competent approaches in mental health care represents a significant advance in promoting equity and inclusion, bringing benefits to society as a whole (Farias et al., 2024; Oliveira, 2024). By valuing diversity and combating prejudice, we contribute to building a more just, egalitarian and healthy society for all.

7. Public Policies and Community Initiatives

The implementation of public policies and community initiatives aimed at the mental health of racialized populations is essential to ensure equitable access to mental health services, reduce disparities and promote social inclusion. It is therefore necessary to intensify efforts in this regard, allocating specific resources to promote mental health in racialized communities, in order to expand the scope and effectiveness of the actions developed (Meira et al., 2024; Castro, Meira, Vieira & Gomes (2024).

One of the important strategies is the development of culturally sensitive prevention and intervention programs that meet the specific needs of these communities. This implies considering the particularities of the sociocultural contexts, as well as the experiences of discrimination and exclusion experienced by racialized



populations. In this way, it is possible to promote resilience and strengthen the internal resources of each individual, contributing to facing the challenges imposed by mental health. Furthermore, it is important to encourage the active and effective participation of racialized communities in the development and implementation of mental health policies (Sousa, 2023; Paula Carvalho et al., 2023).

Only through an inclusive and horizontal dialogue is it possible to ensure that the strategies adopted are truly consistent with the demands and realities of these populations. (Junior, 2024; Santos et al., 2023; Oliveira et al., 2023)

. Furthermore, working in partnership with community leaders and local organizations is essential to establish an environment of trust and promote the sustainability of these initiatives (Santana, 2021). In this way, by strengthening public policies and community initiatives aimed at the mental health of racialized populations, it is possible to build the society we so desire, with social justice and inclusion. Ensuring equitable access to mental health services and reducing disparities is a commitment that must be assumed by everyone, aiming to promote general well-being and build a healthier and more supportive society for all its members.

As final considerations

Given the complexity of the intersections between mental illness and race, it is essential to recognize the importance of racially sensitive approaches in promoting mental health. This study highlighted the need to understand the specific experiences of racialized people in the context of diagnosis, treatment, and access to mental health services, aiming to reduce existing disparities. In addition, it is important to highlight the importance of public policies and community initiatives that consider racial and cultural diversity, seeking to ensure more equitable and effective care for all ethnic-racial groups.

Throughout the study, it was possible to identify that the relationship between mental illness, race, and intersectionality presents significant challenges, including stigma, access barriers, and the need for culturally competent approaches. Deepening the perceptions and experiences of racialized individuals in relation to mental health also emerged as a relevant point for understanding and acting in this field. These



aspects highlight the importance of considering racial and gender diversity in the formulation of mental health policies and practices.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that future research deepen the analysis of the experiences of racialized individuals in the context of mental illness, considering different sociocultural contexts and the impact of mental health policies. In addition, it is essential to promote the training of professionals capable of dealing with ethnic-racial diversity, as well as to encourage the creation of mental health programs and services that meet the specific needs of minority groups, aiming to promote equity and psychosocial well-being.

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