

The Mental Health Consequences of the Global Housing Crisis

Housing shortages are a big problem in many cities around the world. According to the World Bank, the worldwide housing crisis is anticipated to have an impact on 1.6 billion people by 2025. It is especially acute in major metropolitan areas, where demand for housing outstrips available supply. This results in intense competition for limited housing, raising prices and driving people away from city centers. In addition to exacerbating social problems, this dynamic also threatens economic growth and undermines public safety. Safe and clean housing is a basic human need, but a lack of affordable housing is fuelling a global housing crisis. In line with the rest of the globe, Turkey's housing costs and rents have dramatically grown, and demand for college housing has outpaced supply. The arrival of Syrians and other immigrants to Turkey in recent years and the preference for Turkey by those who have recently fled from Russia and Ukraine have deepened this problem. In addition to these, the housing issue has worsened as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.¹ This is because the construction sector has been particularly affected by the pandemic, and construction projects have been temporarily suspended.

The housing problem is seriously harming people's lives. People's ability to buy other necessities is decreasing as a result of high housing expenses. This can lead to homelessness, which is also exacerbated by high housing prices. Low-income workers are forced to commute for extended periods of time and lose productivity because there is a lack of affordable housing nearby. As a result, poorer housing and bad conditions became the norm. Numerous health issues are linked to substandard home conditions. These include an increase in accidents as well as infectious diseases, respiratory problems, cardiovascular diseases, and many others.

The housing crisis has a significant impact on people's mental health as well. There is a bidirectional relationship between housing and mental health. Poor mental health can make it harder to cope with housing problems. Serious psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, and anxiety disorders, can make it more difficult to cope with life and housing problems. If a person has a substance use disorder, such as alcoholism or drug addiction, this can also present barriers to getting or keeping a place to live. Many people with substance use and psychiatric disorders are at the highest risk of becoming homeless. These patients struggle with a lack of social support, funding for treatment, the high prevalence of childhood trauma, and high rates of substance use.

On the other hand, housing problems negatively affect mental health and cause an increase in stress, anxiety, and depression for several reasons. First, housing is a fundamental need that humans are programmed to seek out. When we cannot find or afford a place to call our own, it can symbolize feelings of insecurity and powerlessness. This pressure can lead to negative emotions such as fear, anger, resentment, and loneliness. Second, inadequate or unstable housing often leads to living in overcrowded conditions or without proper ventilation or insulation. These conditions are highly stressful and can contribute to anxiety disorders. Third, situations where people have been displaced from their homes often result in severe financial hardship. This poverty creates huge barriers to obtaining quality medical care and other necessary services, which further increases stress levels. Fourth, displacement also disrupts social networks, which may lead individuals into isolation and increased rates of depression symptoms.²

The rates of having a wide range of physical health problems and chronic diseases, substance use, and psychiatric disorders are high in those who have a housing crisis and those who are homeless. Unfortunately, considering that the underlying factors have not disappeared and



even new ones have been added, we can predict that the negative effects of this housing crisis on mental health may increase globally. For these reasons, while it is necessary to provide psychological support to those who have a housing crisis and the homeless, it will be important to make improvements in mental health policies regarding this problem, which has a role in the development and worsening of psychiatric disorders and substance use disorders.³

References

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