A Report on the Impact of Urban Green Spaces on Community Mental Health

Introduction

Urbanisation has contributed to improved populations' health status due to increased healthcare access. However, rapidly growing cities are at rising risk of public health threats. The ability to adapt to environmental changes influences urbanisation's health impact (Gianfredi et al., 2021). Visiting green spaces is linked with improved mental health. The amount of neighbourhood green space reflects populations' mood outcomes (Pasanen et al., 2023). This report delineates how urban green spaces influence community mental health. The acute outcomes and therapeutic application of green space for mental health are elucidated. The report further explores how mental health is promoted by green spaces with evident case studies from different nations.

Acute Outcomes of Green Space

Maintaining healthy and liveable urban cities, and access to green space exposure is vital to favourably add to human health. Through different mechanisms, green space benefits human well-being. Increased physical activity, improved mental restoration, and greater social engagement are the main optimistic outcomes (Bryer et al., 2024; Gianfredi et al., 2021). Time spent in the natural environment offers more positive psychological experiences. Pro-mental health behaviours are promoted in green spaces. Simple exposure to the natural environment is mentally restorative. It has a beneficial influence on peoples' emotions and problem-solving ability. Green spaces enrich exercise-related improvements in terms of affective state and attentional capacity (Barton & Rogerson, 2017).

A positive association is evidently reported between urban green space exposure and mental health. Performing leisure activities in urban green spaces accompanies lower psychological distress. It works as a great way to stabilise mood swings and fluctuations in depression patients (Gianfredi et al., 2021). People living in more urbanised areas are likely to experience social isolation. Neighbourhood green space helps people alleviate loneliness and have restorative psychological experiences. The availability of urban green space is linked with greater mental health symptoms (Pasanen et al., 2023; Callaghan et al., 2021).

Therapeutic Application of Green Space

Urban green spaces are essentially vital in ensuring healthy and sustainable living conditions. Some well-known interventions related to green space exposure are nature-based therapeutic therapy, a virtual wild nature experience, and a 90-minute nature walk. The interventions contribute to greater mental health outcomes (Callaghan et al., 2021). Structured therapeutic interventions for vulnerable population groups can be targetedly delivered in green spaces. People with dementia, mental ill-health, or stress are targeted to receive the therapeutic advantage of green space in urban settings. Wilderness therapy, care farming, social and therapeutic horticulture, and ecotherapy are nature-therapeutic interventions (Barton & Rogerson, 2017).

People living in urban areas with more green space as compared to less green space have healthier cortisol profiles. Their mental distress is lower along with better outcomes for anxiety and depression. Positive mood and greater well-being are common among people who spend more time in green spaces (Barton & Rogerson, 2017). Physical, emotional, and social functioning outcomes are enhanced with nature-based interventions (Houlden et al., 2018). The beneficial effects of green space exposure are evident on mental health, cognitive function, cardiovascular health, and maternal health and birth outcomes (Callaghan et al., 2021).

Urban Green Spaces Promote Mental Health

Urban green spaces are fundamentally essential for healthy physical and mental well-being. Improved mental health is marked by happiness, life satisfaction, fulfilment, and functioning in life. Mental distress is alleviated in green spaces and people are able to cope well with stressors in their daily lives (Houlden et al., 2018). Engaging in greenspaces offers mental health and well-being benefits. It functions as an upstream preventive mental health promotion intervention. Sensory-perceptual and immunological processes' improvement in green spaces promotes mental health. Optimal doses can vary in terms of environmental, personal, social, and community factors (Barton & Rogerson, 2017; Gianfredi et al., 2021).

The quantity of and access to green space in the UK reported positive results for psychological distress. Exercise in green spaces in the UK countryside contributes to positive

effects on health and psychological well-being. Residential greenness in the UK is linked with a reduced prevalence of major depressive disorders (Callaghan et al., 2021). Urbanisation in the US has increased the risk of many mental health disorders. However, an increased urban green land cover in metropolitan areas helps in mental restoration from stress and fatigue. Natural scenic places with greener land positively affect mental health (Tsai et al., 2018).

Evidence from research investigations from Australia reveals that neighbourhood greenness is linked with positive mental health. Walking into the woods or strolling in the park positively affects mental well-being. Access to public green spaces and parks in urban Australian areas is associated with favourable mental health outcomes (Callaghan et al., 2021). Research in Australian urban settings underlines that open grass is linked with lower mental healthcare expenditure. Improved access to urban green spaces led to a resolute reduction in mental health costs (Astell-Burt et al., 2022).

Conclusion

To conclude, urbanisation has caused a lot of negative health impacts globally. However, green space availability and accessibility in urban settings improve people's mental well-being. The main purpose of spending time in green spaces is for psychological restoration. Psychological distress is reduced and mood swings are well-managed in urban green spaces. Local-area urban green space and life satisfaction are interdependent. The therapeutic application of urban green space on mental health outcomes is evidenced in research. Research in different nations such as Australia, the UK, and the US has revealed that urban green spaces promote mental well-being.

Recommendations

Certain recommendations within the context of urban green spaces and community mental health are the following:

- It is recommended to implement state-wide initiatives in order to establish new greenspaces in every neighbourhood.
- It is recommended to increase funding for research to explore the long-term mental health impacts of urban green spaces.

- It is recommended to introduce community engagement programs in order to promote awareness.

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