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Brazil: Is Mental Health Just Taboo?

Mental health is an issue that remains untreated in Brazil. About 68% of Brazil's population is between the ages 15-64, which is the average age range for both anxiety disorders and depression. In 2017 the World Health Organization (WHO) determined Brazil as the most anxious population in the world. With 9.3% of the population exhibiting symptoms. Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, stress and depression cases have doubled, while anxiety cases have tripled. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for people between the ages 15-29. In 2019, there were 12,000 cases, equivalent to one suicide every 35 minutes (Sebben, 2020). There is a heightened risk of mental health issues for children between the ages 15-17. A concern for adolescents is their living situations in the outskirts of urban areas. These youth face serious sexual and reproductive health risks, including abuse and malnutrition. Also, mothers who have little to no years of education are more likely to have depressive and anxiety disorders, which affects the mental health of their children. Also, the lower the mother's education, the greater likelihood that their child will not receive a proper education due to financial issues, which also negatively affects their mental health.

Though mental health cases are extremely high, most of the population, including children, go untreated because Brazilian culture is reluctant to addressing the issue and there is a scarcity of child psychiatric professionals. Mental health cases are extremely high, yet people still call mental health taboo due to lack of education on the topic. There are very few medical

schools that offer classes on child psychiatry. Due to the shortage of educated professionals, this leaves very few resources for the children in need. Furthermore, families who have financial problems find it difficult to afford psychiatric help for their children. The World Health Organization concluded a connection between financial problems at an early age and depression at 18 years old. Children that go untreated will have negative long-term effects. They are more likely to be antisocial and initiate substance abuse at an early age. Ways to prevent this is to provide and improve training for mental health professionals. Also, providing better financial options for the families who are struggling. This will allow adolescents to have better access to mental health doctors. Providing help early on can lead adolescents to better long-term conditioned lives.

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