


## INTERSECTIONALITY, MENTAL HEALTH AND THE REMAINING BLACK POPULATION OF QUILOMBO: THE NECROPOLITICS OF INVISIBILITY AND ABANDONMENT

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.039-001>

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## ABSTRACT

Mental health problems are a public health problem at a global level, with Brazil being the country with the highest prevalence of depression, in addition to being the second most prevalent in the Americas (WHO, 2022). However, mental health problems do not occur homogeneously throughout the population, and the populations are more vulnerable from a social point of view, at the mercy of a more accentuated morbidity and mortality process. From this perspective, the remaining black population of quilombos, intersected by systemic racism, invisibility and social inequalities, are more prone to development and incidence of mental health problems. The objective of this study was to highlight in the Brazilian scientific literature the impact on the mental health of black people remaining in quilombos. This is an integrative literature review study with a qualitative approach. The PICO strategy was used to develop the study. The guiding question was established: what is the scientific evidence on the impact of mental health on the remaining quilombo population in Brazil? The platforms used for the research were Google Scholar and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), with the descriptors: "mental health", "black population" and "quilombola", using the Boolean operator AND. For sample analysis, the stages of analytical, critical and detailed reading of the texts were followed. 04 studies were excluded when the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied and 04 were used to compose the present study. The results showed that social and economic indicators are related to the health and mental well-being of individuals. Thus, the black population belonging to quilombola communities carries the worst indicators when thinking about access, morbidity and mortality due to various health problems, especially with regard to mental health. The process of enslavement and then abandonment by social policies oppresses this population to such an extent that it compromises their survival and strategies for facing life. Structural racism permeates the life and health conditions of this population. Furthermore, as it is a minority group within the black Brazilian population, which faces social, economic and racial inequalities, the existing gap in data and studies that deal with this theme is highlighted, pointing to an epistemological invisibility around its dynamics and the consequences on the health of this population. Finally, the need to strengthen the health care policy for the remaining black population in quilombos in Brazil.

**Keywords:** Mental Health. Black Population. Quilombo. Racism.

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health problems are a global public health problem. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), almost 1 billion people, including 14% of adolescents worldwide, live with a mental disorder, being the leading cause of disability, with one person developing a mental disorder every six years, people with serious mental health problems die, on average, 10 to 20 years earlier than the general population, mostly due to preventable physical illnesses and more than 1 in 100 people die as a result of suicide, with 58% of suicides occurring before the age of 50.

Brazil is the country with the highest prevalence of depression, in addition to being the second country with the highest prevalence in the Americas (WHO, 2022). Through these indices, WHO highlights the urgent need to seek effective approaches in the field of health, as they not only provide a comprehensive view of mental health conditions at a global level, but also highlight the importance of implementing effective measures to achieve the improvement of the quality of global health. promote well-being and reduce health disparities.

In addition, it is worth noting that the mental health of the black population is an essential theme for understanding the inequalities and challenges faced by the community. According to data provided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2022, the black population represents 56% of the total Brazilian population (IBGE, 2022). Black people are more likely to develop depression, in addition to having reduced levels of psychological well-being and self-esteem, being more likely to face chronic stress and a higher incidence of adaptive disorders.

Systemic racism, racial violence, and social inequalities are the cause of the higher incidence of black people with mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, and can be a potent activator of the stress response (Félix, 2022). According to data from the Brazilian Ministry of Health, black adolescents and young people are more likely to commit suicide, and the risk in the age group of 10 to 29 years was 45% higher among young people who declare themselves black and brown than among whites in 2016 (Brasil, 2016). It is important to recognize this problem so that solutions can be developed to improve the mental health of the black population. In this context, some populations are more vulnerable, such as the remaining black population in quilombos, being a minority group within the Brazilian black population, which faces social and economic inequalities, as well as racial discrimination.

The evidence indicates that social and economic indicators are related to the health and mental well-being of individuals belonging to quilombola communities, pointing to the

need to build and implement interventions and public health policies aimed at this population that take into account their socio-historical and cultural aspects (Batista; Rocha, 2020).

Dealing with the mental health of the black population that resides in quilombola communities in urban centers is a topic of great relevance, since it is a social group that suffers from social and economic inequalities. The black Brazilian population has for centuries suffered from structured racism in society, a reflection of a history marked by extreme acts of violence and dehumanization directed against the black and indigenous population, and this historical pattern can be observed when observing events such as the African diaspora and the slavery of the black population (Fernandes *et al.*, 2018).

In this historical context, quilombos emerge as symbols of resistance, formed with fundamental strategic purposes to confront the slave system, where quilombolas not only faced an oppressive system, but also found a place to preserve their identity, culture and beliefs, creating an environment where mental health was strengthened (Batista; Rocha, 2020). It is critical to understand the mental health of people in these communities, as this plays a crucial role in fostering an environment that values and strengthens resilience and the ability to cope with these challenges.

However, the lack of comprehensive research on the mental health of the black population in urban quilombos represents a scientific gap in the reflection of this health-disease process. These communities face challenges related to the urban context in which they live, but few studies focus on studying and investigating their experiences. In addition, research on the availability or lack of support networks for this population is limited, these gaps are important because mental health is a fundamental part of human well-being. When the needs of this population are not understood, the ability to develop effective interventions to improve well-being is compromised. Therefore, this study is essential to broaden the understanding of the complexities involved in the mental health of quilombola populations in urban areas and to identify support networks available to these communities.

## OBJECTIVE

To highlight in the Brazilian scientific literature the impact on the mental health of black people living in quilombos

## METHODOLOGY

This is an Integrative Literature Review Study, of a qualitative nature, debating the impact on the mental health of black people remaining from quilombos in national scientific

production. The integrative literature review consists of the analysis of carefully selected studies to support the construction of a theoretical conceptualization, enabling the synthesis of current knowledge on a specific topic and identifying areas that need further investigation. This research method facilitates the integration of multiple published studies and enables the formulation of comprehensive conclusions within a specific area of study (Mendes *et al.*, 2008).

The PICO Strategy was applied, an acronym of P for population/patients; I for Intervention; C for comparison or control; and O for expected outcome/*outcome*. For the present research, the acronym was determined: P – remaining black population of quilombo; I – mental health; C - does not apply; O – mental health of the black population remaining from quilombos. Thus, the guiding question was established: what is the scientific evidence on the impact of mental health on the remaining quilombo population in Brazil?

The platforms used for the research were Google Scholar and Scientific Electronic Library Online (Scielo), with the descriptors: "mental health", "black population" and "quilombola", using the Boolean operator AND. The following inclusion criteria were defined: complete Brazilian articles published from 2019 to 2024, in Portuguese and that addressed the mental health problems of the aforementioned population. The search took place in October and updated in November 2024.

For the analysis of the sample, the following steps were followed: analytical, critical and detailed reading of the texts, extracting from them the results deemed most pertinent to characterize the scientific production related to the theme, taking care to verify whether the publications were repeated among the different databases explored (Bardin, 2016).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After searching the database, 08 studies were selected for analysis. In order to meet the objective proposed in the review, 04 studies were excluded when the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, and 04 were used to compose the present study.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019), mental health problems are a public health problem at the global level, with Brazil being the country with the highest prevalence of depression, in addition to being the second with the highest prevalence in the Americas (WHO, 2022). A person's well-being is intrinsically linked to a series of fundamental conditions, which go far beyond the exclusively psychological aspect. In addition to individual aspects, mental health is also socially determined. Therefore, it should be considered that mental health results from the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors, and is characterized as biopsychosocial.

From this perspective, the prevalence of mental disorders does not occur equally in the entire population. Systemic racism, racial violence and social inequalities are the cause of the higher incidence of blacks with mental disorders such as depression. For Mota (2019), the black population often carries the burden of historical traumas, such as the process of enslavement, social abandonment in the post-emancipation period, the genocide of black youth, racial segregation and other forms of oppression over the centuries, and it is possible to affirm that racism, as a relationship of power and support of privileges, can generate psychic suffering (David, 2018).

In this context, some populations are more vulnerable, such as the remaining black population in quilombos, being a minority group within the Brazilian black population, which faces social and economic inequalities, as well as racial discrimination. Quilombola populations suffer from common mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, due to the adverse social conditions they face such as poverty, discrimination, violence, and lack of access to basic health and education services (Dimenstein et al., 2020).

In this historical scenario, quilombos emerge as symbols of resistance, formed with fundamental strategic purposes to confront the slave system, and which faced not only the oppressive system, but also found a place for the preservation of their identity, culture, and beliefs, creating an environment where mental health was strengthened (Batista et al., 2019). Thus, quilombos stand out as territories of historical and social significance, whose relevance goes beyond the struggle against oppression, also reflecting on the dynamics of care and strengthening of the communities that inhabit them.

In addition, the guarantee of the constitutional right to health includes mental health care, as it is a duty of the Brazilian State, which is now responsible for offering decent health care conditions for the entire population. In Brazil, the National Mental Health Policy is a state policy, defined by Federal Law 10.216/2001. The Federal Government's actions on this topic are coordinated by the Ministry of Health. This policy is materialized through the strategies and guidelines adopted to organize care for people with specific mental health treatment and care needs.

This is an important and complex topic that encompasses a wide variety of mental disorders. However, the scientific literature is still scarce regarding the mental health of the black population. Despite this, some studies have been carried out to better understand the prevalence of mental disorders in black people. A study published in the Journal of Psychology of UNESP reports an occupational therapeutic process, highlighting the potential of racial representativeness in mental health care relations, discussing the aspects of the theme: the construction of racism in Brazil; the importance of professional training to



meet this demand; the recognition and empowerment of blacks; the understanding of occupational therapy about the individual, his illness and human activities; and intervention strategies aimed at the specificities of the mental health of the black population. (Ricci; Santos, 2020)

The most common mental disorders in Brazil, in general, are anxiety and depression, with prevalences of 9.3% and 5.8%, respectively, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). In addition, new data show that 86% of Brazilians suffer from some mental disorder, such as eating disorders, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress and Borderline personality disorder.

Public health services in relation to quilombola territories face significant challenges such as the need for knowledge exchange between professionals who provide services to these communities and their traditional knowledge and practices, and planning services need to understand and recognize this knowledge and practices, which should be done with caution, avoiding making the mistake of exaggerating the lifestyle of its residents. The health issues of this population must also take into account the invisibility and inequality they suffer (Melo, 2017).

According to the publication made by the Racism and Health group of the Brazilian Association of Collective Health (Abrasco, 2020), during the COVID-19 pandemic, Brazilian quilombola communities with a large concentration of people in risk groups faced barriers in accessing health services, such as primary care, and food insecurity, being exposed to greater risks of death after infection. Quilombola populations suffer from common mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, due to the adverse social conditions they face, such as poverty, discrimination, violence, and lack of access to basic health and education services (Dimenstein *et al.*, 2020).

The mental health of residents in quilombos in Brazil is a topic of great relevance, as these communities face specific challenges that can significantly impact the psychological well-being of these individuals. In an integrative review found in the Scielo database on Mental health in quilombola communities in Brazil, it analyzes studies on the mental health of quilombola populations, considering the historical, social, and cultural aspects that influence their health. The authors identified 11 articles that addressed topics such as violence, racism, stress, depression, anxiety, alcoholism, suicide, and religiosity. They concluded that there is a dearth of research on the mental health of these communities and that there is a need to develop culturally appropriate and participatory interventions. (Batista; Rocha, 2020).

A study evaluated the prevalence of common mental disorders (CMD) in 1,004 quilombolas from 12 rural communities in the north of Minas Gerais. The results showed that 35.9% of the participants had CMD, with women, the elderly, the illiterate, and those who reported racial discrimination being the most affected. One of the critical factors to be considered is the persistence of structural racism and racial discrimination faced by quilombolas (Queiroz *et al.*, 2022). Constant exposure to these forms of prejudice can generate chronic psychological stress, anxiety, and depression. The lack of representation and equal opportunities in different spheres of society can contribute to an adverse psychosocial environment.

The mental health of quilombo residents in Brazil is a relevant and complex concern, as these communities face specific challenges that can significantly impact the psychological well-being of their members. The unique experience of quilombos, marked by histories of resistance, racial discrimination, and unfavorable socioeconomic conditions, can contribute to the prevalence of mental health problems in these contexts.

Finally, understanding mental health in urban quilombola communities is not just about individual well-being, but also encompasses a matter of social justice. By recognizing the unique and often unfair experiences faced by these communities, culturally sensitive mental health interventions can be developed that address their specific needs. In addition, strengthening mental health in these communities contributes to building a more just and equitable society. Thus, building an environment that promotes mental well-being for everyone, regardless of their background. Therefore, investing in the mental health of quilombola populations in urban areas is a fundamental step towards a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

## CONCLUSION

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the literature, most studies highlighted that social and economic indicators are related to the health and mental well-being of individuals belonging to quilombola communities (BATISTA; ROCHA, 2019), evidencing the complex relationship between such factors and the mental health of the remaining black population of quilombo, emphasizing the importance of deepening the look at the conditions that impact mental health in quilombola communities. Therefore, this theme is relevant, since it is a social group that suffers from social and economic inequalities. The black Brazilian population has suffered for centuries a process of structural racism, a reflection of a history marked by extreme acts of violence and dehumanization directed against the black and indigenous population. It is also possible to observe the historical pattern linked to the





African diaspora and the enslavement of the black population (FERNANDES *et al.*, 2018) as an aggravating factor of the mental health problems that affect this population.

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