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POVERTY AND MENTAL ILLNESS: AN UNBREAKABLE CYCLE?

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Mental condition is determined by a multiplicity of factors, such as biological, individual, social, economic and environmental.

Mental and behavioural disorders are estimated to account for 13% of the global burden of disease, according to the World Health Organization. Despite this evidence, mental health is a neglected and an under-researched area of public health, particularly in low-and-middle-income-countries (LMICs).

Recent studies found an association between common mental disorders (CMD), such as depression and anxiety, and poverty. However, investigation on several specific poverty indicators has revealed a much more complex scenario.

A recent meta-analysis showed that variables such as education, food insecurity, housing, social class, socio-economic status and financial stress are consistently and strongly associated with CMD. In turn, the disabling effects of mental disorders impair the ability of persons to self-sustain, reflecting a relationship between poverty and mental disorders that has been likened to a vicious cycle.

The authors emphasize the need for improvement of LMICs mental health policies.