



Chapter 12

Ethical Issues for Climate Change and Mental Health

Pankaj Bhambri

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4437-4103>
Guru Nanak Dev Engineering College, Ludhiana, India

Sita Rani

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2778-0214>
Guru Nanak Dev Engineering College, Ludhiana, India

ABSTRACT

This chapter delves into the complex ethical dimensions surrounding the intersection of climate change and mental well-being. As global environmental shifts increasingly impact the psychological health of individuals and communities, ethical considerations become paramount in guiding effective and culturally sensitive interventions. The chapter navigates the complexities of integrating Indigenous perspectives, fostering global collaboration, and balancing immediate mental health needs with long-term sustainability goals. Case studies and ethical dilemmas offer real-world insights into the challenges faced by practitioners, highlighting the need for nuanced decision-making processes. This chapter aims to enhance the resilience, fairness, and ethical foundation of addressing the significant effects of climate change on mental health and well-being by analyzing and tackling these ethical considerations.

1. INTRODUCTION

The perception of climate change has evolved beyond being just an environmental issue, as its significant effects on mental health have garnered increasing global attention (Adams, M. 2021). The complex correlation between climate change and

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mental health is diverse, involving both immediate and indirect repercussions that greatly impact individuals and society. The increasing occurrence and severity of climate-related phenomena, such as hurricanes, wildfires, and droughts, directly contribute to mental health consequences, including trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety disorders. These sudden catastrophes can result in the displacement of people, the death of loved ones, and the ruin of homes, creating a complicated interaction of emotional and psychological difficulties for those impacted (Davidson, J.M., & Mill, R.W. 2020).

In addition to these immediate impacts, the gradual, pervasive changes associated with climate change pose indirect threats to mental well-being. The looming uncertainty about the future, exacerbated by phenomena like rising sea levels and temperature extremes, contributes to a growing sense of eco-anxiety—a chronic fear and worry about the environmental consequences. This emotional burden is not confined to individuals directly impacted by climate events; it permeates societies globally, leading to a collective psychological toll. Low-income communities and disadvantaged groups, which are vulnerable populations, are frequently impacted to a greater extent. This exacerbates pre-existing gaps in mental health and highlights the ethical obligation to address climate justice within the realm of mental health (IPCC 2018).

Moreover, the intricate web of climate change impacts extends beyond immediate trauma, influencing social structures, economic stability, and community dynamics. Changes in climate patterns can disrupt livelihoods, strain social support systems, and escalate resource conflicts, creating conditions conducive to chronic stress and mental health disorders (Kaur, A. et al. 2012). The importance of fully understanding the relationship between climate change and mental health is emphasized by the wider impact it has on society. This understanding should go beyond individual psychological reactions and also take into account the complex connections within communities and the larger social structure. Understanding this intricate interaction is crucial for formulating ethical and efficient approaches to address and manage the mental health issues stemming from climate change.

As scientists delve deeper into the various effects of climate change, it becomes more and more clear that addressing mental health in the context of a changing climate is not only a scientific necessity but also a moral obligation. The correlation between climate change and mental health highlights the interdependence of worldwide issues and the pressing need to implement ethical frameworks that direct comprehensive remedies (Pachauri, R.K., & Reisinger, A. 2007). In this context, mental health professionals, policymakers, and communities must collaboratively navigate the ethical dimensions of climate change adaptation and mitigation, striving for solutions that prioritize the well-being of individuals and societies in the face of a rapidly changing world.

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