

Review article

Intersections between hybrid violence, public health, mental health, and therapeutic justice

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Abstract

Hybrid violence poses a central threat to mental health and community public health. This article analyzes how environments at the epicenter of hybrid violence produce significant psychological effects that, when accumulated, have a collective impact and require comprehensive approaches based on therapeutic justice. Based on a narrative review of the literature in Spanish and English from 2015 to 2025, drawn from databases such as PubMed, SciELO, Redalyc, Latindex, DOAJ, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Science, and Dialnet. The study identified the importance of establishing a direct link between public health and therapeutic justice. This confirms the need for interdisciplinary perspectives to understand and address hybrid violence. The findings indicate that continuous exposure to these forms of violence causes psychological suffering and undermines social cohesion. In this context, therapeutic justice emerges as a promising avenue for guiding policies and actions that integrate reparations, prevention, and community strengthening.

Keywords

Violence, Mental Health, Public Health.

Resumen

La violencia híbrida se configura como una amenaza central para la salud mental y la salud pública comunitaria. Este artículo analiza cómo los entornos epicentro de violencia híbrida producen efectos psicológicos significativos que, al acumularse, impactan de manera colectiva y requieren enfoques integrales basados en la justicia terapéutica. A partir de una revisión narrativa de literatura en español e inglés del 2015 al 2025, en bases de datos como PubMed, SciELO, Redalyc, Latindex, DOAJ, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Science y Dialnet. Se identificó la importancia de establecer la relación directa entre salud pública y justicia terapéutica. Esto confirma la necesidad de perspectivas interdisciplinarias para comprender y atender la violencia híbrida. Los hallazgos indican que la exposición continua a estas formas de violencia genera sufrimiento psicológico y deterioro de la cohesión social. En este contexto, la justicia terapéutica aparece como una vía prometedora para orientar políticas y acciones que integren reparación, prevención y fortalecimiento comunitario.

Palabras clave

Violencia, Salud Mental, Salud Pública.

Introduction

Mental health is an essential component of human well-being, related to the ability to form bonds, cope with adverse situations, and enjoy life.¹ From a public health perspective, it is understood as a comprehensive process

aimed at promoting quality of life, especially in contexts where exposure to violent environments affects individual and collective well-being.^{2,3} This relationship explains the interconnection between mental health and the individual, social, economic, and political factors that shape experiences of violence.^{4,5}

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Intersecciones entre violencia híbrida, salud pública, salud mental y justicia terapéutica

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Hybrid violence constitutes one of the main threats to public health, as it brings together structural, community-based, criminal, and gender-based manifestations within a single environment. Although the current literature offers numerous analyses of these forms of violence, the concept of hybrid violence allows for a broader understanding by highlighting the interconnection and coexistence of different types of aggression within the same context.⁶

Jiménez Bautista, drawing on the classic typology of direct, structural, and cultural violence “along with contributions on symbolic violence,” defines the concept of hybrid violence as the simultaneous interaction of various forms of violence in specific contexts. This allows for a more comprehensive explanation of phenomena such as urban, gender-based, political, or migration-related violence and helps guide comprehensive responses that integrate public health, social protection, and judicial systems.⁶ Table 1 presents the types of violence and their definitions.

Therapeutic justice is defined as an “interdisciplinary approach to law that examines the impact of legal norms, procedures, and the conduct of legal practitioners on the psychological well-being of individuals involved in the justice system.”⁷

Intimate partner violence is associated with depression, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, and alexithymia.^{8,9} Among refugee populations, the incidence of severe emotional symptoms increases,¹⁰ and during the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence intensified, triggering aggressive and self-harming behaviors in children.¹¹ It is worth noting that domestic violence can arise in an environment of emotional dependence, fostering attitudes that exacerbate the violence.¹²

Hybrid violence also manifests in family dynamics where digital devices, authoritarian patterns, and sociocultural inequalities reproduce visible and invisible forms of violence through cultural discourses that

legitimize oppression and invisible forms of symbolic domination.^{13,14}

Understanding the relationship between mental health and hybrid violence is essential for the development of public policies that integrate medical care, social services, the legal system, and education.¹⁵

Therapeutic justice has evolved from being a strand of Integrative Law to becoming a paradigm that conceives of law as an agent of change and well-being. It distinguishes between theoretical approaches and practical applications, incorporates a more humane view of the legal system, and fosters interdisciplinary collaboration between psychology and law, known as the iuspsychological paradigm (which studies law as a therapeutic agent, examining how laws, judicial processes, and legal institutions generate psychological, emotional, and social effects on the individuals involved) from a collective perspective, without disregarding differences in practical applications.^{16,17}

In Colombia, various studies document instances of hybrid violence in schools and universities, affecting mental health and educational retention.^{18,19} Scenarios such as the social unrest in Chile demonstrate how direct, structural, and symbolic forms of violence converge, highlighting the need to strengthen state legitimacy and promote a neutral peace based on the guarantee of rights.^{20,21}

Other studies highlight the consequences of psychological and domestic violence on mental health, as well as the difficulties in achieving legal recognition due to regulatory ambiguities.²²⁻²⁵ Dating violence is linked to stress, depression, and anxiety; it transcends the individual level and affects public health.²⁶

The combination of different forms of violence leads to revictimization, judicial impunity, and the repetition of violent patterns in contexts marked by socioeconomic precariousness. The psychological consequences highlight institutional-

Table 1. Types of violence and definitions

Type of violence	Definition
Direct (verbal, psychological, and physical)	Violence in which an action causes direct harm to the target, with virtually no mediating factors intervening between the origin and the target of the action
Structural	Processes of violence in which the action occurs through institutional or structural mediations
Cultural	All cultural aspects that, in one way or another, support or justify the realities and practices of violence
Hybrid violence ⁶	The intersection of different forms of violence (direct, structural, and cultural)

fragility, prolonging trauma and limiting access to justice and mental health care. Thus, hybrid violence not only affects individuals but also sustains an unequal social order, which calls for comprehensive public policies on prevention, psychosocial care, and therapy that can break the cycle.^{27,28}

The study of political violence has shifted from focusing on armed and police violence to include more subtle forms present even in democracies. Although police violence and its psychosocial effects are better understood, gaps remain regarding everyday state violence and mechanisms of social control in Latin America. Violence is a historical and social construct, sustained by power relations, resistance, and discourses that legitimize it. The State exercises it as a mechanism that regulates citizen action, often disguised under notions of “force” or “order.” Currently, political violence must be understood as a hybrid and relational phenomenon, where the physical and the symbolic intertwine and whose persistence depends on its cultural legitimization.²⁹ In this regard, memory in contexts of conflict is not a fixed legacy, but rather a generational process constructed through collective action and diverse materialities. In settings marked by state violence or feminist mobilizations, different generations influence one another, legitimizing even the voices of those who did not directly experience the violence. Thus, memory takes shape as a symbolic, political, and affective fabric, where the past can be reinterpreted, rejected, or brought into the present through new practices.³⁰

Gender inequalities and violence against women have been increasingly well measured in terms of prevalence, consequences, and access to justice; however, gaps remain regarding perpetrators, risk factors, and non-intimate partner violence. The evidence also shows a lack of evaluation of preventive interventions and persistent gaps in the workplace, political sphere, and care sector, as well as limited application of an intersectional approach. This underscores the need to incorporate intersectionality in order to design more effective public policies.³¹⁻³³

Human rights and human dignity are fundamental pillars of individual and social life. This framework promotes values and empathy that foster human relationships in accordance with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights^{34,35} and that seek to guarantee dignity; however, violations of these rights continue to rise and affect individuals differently based on sex, reflecting power inequalities

and the persistent subordination of women. Violence against women has severe impacts on mental health, making it essential to promote effective policies that address both its causes and its consequences.³⁶

The review shows that the connection between public health and therapeutic justice remains an underdeveloped field, despite its potential to address the complexity of hybrid violence through comprehensive approaches. This, according to some hypotheses, could be due to the arbitrary distinction between the bodies of knowledge from which public health and therapeutic justice stem, the medical sciences and the legal field, respectively; the operation of the health system separate from the judicial system; and the relatively recent development of therapeutic justice. Although the evidence linking these two fields is limited, experiences were identified that point to a possible path forward. In this context, this article is a narrative literature review. Articles in Spanish and English published from 2015 to 2025 were included, and a literature search was conducted in databases such as PubMed, SciELO, Redalyc, Latindex, DOAJ, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Science, and Dialnet. The review included original articles and narrative reviews focused on studies of hybrid violence and its effects on mental health and public health, as well as intervention proposals based on therapeutic justice, highlighting gaps and opportunities for greater interdisciplinary integration.

Discussion

Hybrid violence and its relationship to mental health

The analysis shows that hybrid violence does not occur as an isolated event, but rather as a complex web in which structural, symbolic, and cultural dimensions overlap, reproducing inequality and exclusion in contexts such as social protests, gender-based violence, intimate partner relationships, and family dynamics, the symbolic and the material combine to reinforce patterns of domination that impact mental health. These findings, which highlight the multidimensional nature of hybrid violence, its manifestation in various contexts, and its cumulative effects on mental health,¹⁴ are consistent with the literature, which indicates that combined forms of violence generate cumulative effects, deepen trauma, and undermine individual and collective emotional well-being.

A study by Wexler showed that psychological and domestic violence often go unnoticed, which hinders their clinical and legal identification and increases revictimization, along with symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress, especially among women and adolescents. In contexts of precariousness or institutional weakness, these effects are exacerbated and prolonged. Thus, hybrid violence weakens community resilience and compromises collective mental health, highlighting the need for intersectoral responses focused on redress and well-being.³⁷

Hybrid violence and public health

From a public health perspective, hybrid violence emerges as a complex threat due to its cross-cutting impact on social cohesion, trust in institutions, the exercise of rights, and community functioning. Within the framework of this review, community violence is understood as a collective problem whose resolution requires participatory strategies and not merely measures of control, order, or punishment. Community organization emerges as a key element, as it facilitates support networks, reduces exposure to risks, and promotes protective actions against violence.³⁸

Hybrid violence and therapeutic justice

Therapeutic justice offers a particularly relevant framework for addressing the effects of hybrid violence. This approach is based on the premise that the law can produce both therapeutic and harmful impacts, depending on how its practices are implemented. Spencer and Hueston note that drug treatment and mental health courts stand out as a significant example: they bring together multidisciplinary teams, active judicial participation, and community support, fostering processes of rehabilitation and shared responsibility. They highlight that these courts utilize communication skills “such as active listening and empathetic feedback,” which promote adherence to the processes and generate neuropsychological benefits by activating motivational networks.³⁹ However, these research studies do not describe whether, in addition to therapeutic effects, such approaches might also produce stigmatizing or coercive effects.

Complementarily, mental health programs have been developed for incarcerated individuals aimed at ensuring

continuity of care and reducing recidivism.⁴⁰ Lennox C, *et al.*, mention the “Engerger” program, whose objective was to develop and evaluate a complex collaborative care intervention for inmates with common mental health problems, designed to support their transition to the community and facilitate collaboration between health services and the criminal justice system.⁴¹ These findings reinforce the value of therapeutic justice as an approach that promotes emotional healing, dignity, and resilience, especially in settings where hybrid violence is common and traditional judicial responses often perpetuate trauma.⁴¹

In summary, the findings show that hybrid violence persists in contexts marked by inequality, institutional weakness, and symbolic practices that normalize it. Addressing it requires recognizing the intersection between mental health, public health, and therapeutic justice, moving beyond fragmented or purely punitive responses. In settings with a high prevalence of combined forms of violence, interdisciplinary strategies that integrate psychosocial care, restorative approaches, community strengthening, and human rights-based public policies are essential.

In light of these findings, addressing hybrid violence through a therapeutic justice approach not only enhances the judicial system’s capacity to provide redress and prevent revictimization, but also contributes to the protection of public health and collective well-being. By integrating health, community, and the law, this approach addresses the complexity of the phenomenon and offers sustainable pathways to transform the patterns that perpetuate harm. Figure 1 summarizes these impacts and can serve as a guiding framework for intervention strategies.

Limitations and recommendations

Although this study provides an analysis of hybrid violence and its effects on mental health, public health, and therapeutic justice, it has limitations typical of theoretical works. The interdisciplinary scope of the topic involves multiple approaches and definitions, leading to variations in how it is addressed; however, this diversity also broadens our understanding of the phenomenon. This highlights the heterogeneity of the sources and the need for further research on the topic. It is suggested that future research incorporate comparative empirical studies and analyses of local cases to complement and deepen the findings.

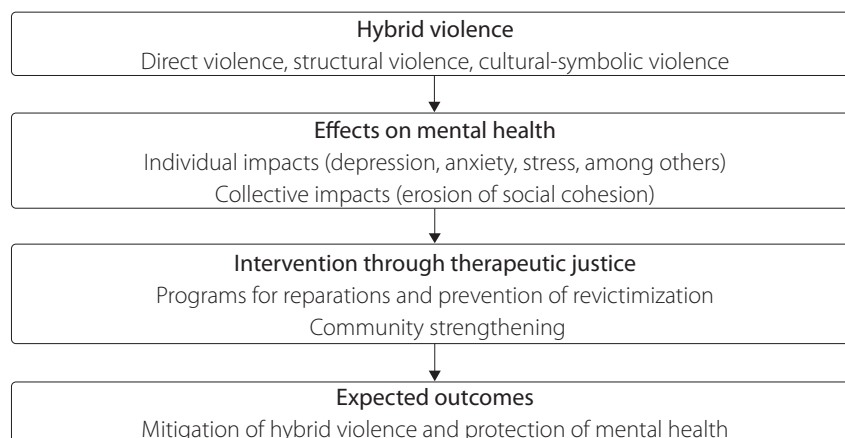


Figure 1. Conceptual overview of hybrid violence and its impacts on mental health

Conclusion

The study demonstrated that hybrid violence is a complex phenomenon that combines direct, structural, and symbolic forms, profoundly affecting individual and collective mental health. Its cumulative and multiscale nature makes it a central challenge for public health, as it causes persistent psychological harm, weakens social cohesion, and restricts rights. In contexts where state responses focus almost exclusively on punitive or reactive measures, trauma tends to be perpetuated, mental health deteriorates, and prevention mechanisms are weakened. Furthermore, institutional fragility hinders early detection, psychosocial care, and coordination among health, justice, and community sectors, increasing risks for vulnerable populations, especially in settings with limited interdisciplinary coordination. From a public health perspective, understanding hybrid violence requires recognizing its systemic nature and moving toward comprehensive policies that integrate prevention, community intervention, and institutional strengthening.

In light of this, therapeutic justice emerges as an appropriate approach to address these impacts, promoting state responses aimed at emotional reparation, dignity, and well-being. The relationship between hybrid violence, public health, and mental health demonstrates that these dimensions are inseparable thereby requiring interdisciplinary strategies that integrate prevention, psychosocial support, and institutional transformation.

The findings indicate that integrating public health and therapeutic justice opens promising avenues for mitigating the psychosocial effects of hybrid violence and strengthening community resilience, moving toward more comprehensive models that are essential in contemporary Latin American contexts and for mental health.

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