

# Health Promoting Opportunities in Urban Environment

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**Abstract.** This paper is attempted to answer to the question "How can psychologists, using psychological science, contribute to the prevention of illness and to the promotion of health, particularly in an urban environment?" It will be shown that in this ecological approach the urban environment is of crucial importance, which opens health promoting opportunities. Media advertise for specific products and have an influence on sale; they create social models, social norms and stereotypes. Social and cultural forces have an impact on stereotypes with regards to healthy and risky behaviour. The educational system has, in collaboration with parents, an important role in shaping healthy behaviour and establishing healthy social norms. We draw a conclusion that we should stop focusing (almost exclusively) on individual responsibility and rationality, understand health related behaviour as habits and move to working with the situational contingencies that are eliciting and reinforcing behaviour.

Keywords: health psychology, health promotion, urban environment.

**Abstrak.** Artikel ini berupaya menjawab pertanyaan "Bagaimana para psikolog, dengan ilmunya, mampu berkontribusi pada pencegahan penyakit dan promosi kesehatan, terutama dalam lingkungan perkotaan?" Akan ditunjukkan bahwa dalam pendekatan ekologis ini, lingkungan perkotaan amat menentukan, yang memberi kesempatan mempromosikan kesehatan. Media mengiklankan produk-produk spesifik dan memengaruhi penjualan; mereka menciptakan model sosial, norma dan stereotip sosial. Kekuatan sosial dan budaya memiliki dampak pada stereotip yang menyangkut perilaku sehat maupun berisiko. Sistem pendidikan memiliki, dalam kerja sama dengan para orang tua, peran penting dalam membentuk perilaku sehat dan mengukuhkan norma sosial yang sehat. Kami menarik simpulan bahwa kami harus mampu berhenti menuntut (nyaris secara eksklusif) tanggung jawab dan rasionalitas individual, memahami bahwa perilaku terkait kesehatan adalah suatu kebiasaan dan mulai bekerja dengan kemungkinan situasional yang mencetuskan dan menguatkan perilaku.

Kata kunci: psikologi kesehatan, promosi kesehatan, lingkungan perkotaan

Health psychology examines the relations between health and behaviour, and the related possibilities to act accordingly. Recent developments in health psychology show (1) that it is not realistic to efficiently combat important health problems targeting individual behaviour and individual responsibility and that it is necessary to intervene at a population level and (2) that the traditional "health education" approach to prevention/health promotion yields sub-optimal effects partly because it is based on dubious theoretical assumptions about behaviour. The most interesting alternative approach is

the comprehensive ecological approach. It will be shown that in this ecological approach the urban environment is of crucial importance, which opens health promoting opportunities.

## Health and Behaviour

If psychology claims to have the potential of contributing to the health of people, that claim is based on the fact that health is related to, and is, to a certain extend, dependent on behaviour. Health psychology is the discipline that examines this relation between health and behaviour since the 1980's (Matarazzo, 1982). As this is a sub-discipline of psychology, it is crucial that the behavioural mechanisms that are related to physical health or

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