



Mental Health



The mental health of youths is a pressing issue around the world. Untreated mental health issues are linked with lower educational attainment, potentially leaving sufferers with lower earning potential, less social mobility, and reduced options for future careers. In addition, those with unmanaged mental health conditions are less likely to contribute to economic growth. As research into, and perception of, mental health issues has widened, so has awareness of the stunting impact they can have on the individual and their community.

There are many causal factors contributing to overall psychological health, and these may be addressed in attempts to halt the increasing numbers of psychological diagnoses made every day by doctors across the world. Childhood abuse or trauma has long-lasting effects, and often the psychological distress it causes will present itself many years later, while bullying can lead to similarly low self-esteem, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. Other drivers of poor health are, perhaps more temporary; social isolation, severe stress and the impact of debilitating poverty. Furthermore, distress can be triggered by substance abuse. In more complex cases of mental distress, several of the above factors combine, which makes treating the issue particularly difficult.

Researchers have suggested that as many as 75% of mental illnesses present themselves before the age of 24, and as such it is imperative that young people are given the strategies to deal with such setbacks. People can be protected from the onset of mental health problems by ensuring that they are physically active and eating healthily, by being part of a stable, caring family, and by having time to rest, relax, and play. It is also important that young people are taught to develop optimism, resilience, and ownership in order to ward off potential psychological illnesses.

If mental health issues do persist, they can manifest themselves in the form of depression, self-harm, and eating disorders. At this point, the importance of prevention is replaced an essential need for effective treatment. It is important that the whole of society, not just the younger generation, becomes 'mental health literate', so that those around young people can intervene early when mental health issues are faced. Professional help should be sought, in many countries – especially in the developing world, there still exists a great deal of stigma which prevents young people seeking help. In the developing world, too, where healthcare systems are stretched, there is often a prioritisation of physical injuries, which mean that psychological issues are left untreated for longer. This causes the illness to become more powerful and complicated.

Points To consider:

- Is it best to tackle mental health issues 'head-on' or to do so via poverty reduction programmes, educational improvement, and cultural change?
- What steps can countries take to ensure mental health is given equal status with physical health?
- Which preventative strategies can be established efficiently and affordably in LEDCs to reduce the burden treating booming numbers of mentally unwell young people?

- How can societies remove some of the pressures on young people in order to allow them to grow up with freedom and enjoyment?

Useful Links:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/c/children-and-young-people>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/mental-health-problems-introduction/causes/#.XFxO1k1vIdV>