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World Health Organization (WHO)

Research Report

Topic 2: Discussing solutions to mitigate mental health cases in adolescents.



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Introduction:

In recent years there has been a steep rise in mental health cases amongst adolescents. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, mental health cases significantly increased because of isolation, strict regulations, and persistent concern for loved ones. In addition, the extensive use of social media has intensified the fear of missing out (FOMO), dissatisfaction with oneself or life and recurring feelings of isolation has contributed to the increased cases of mental health in adolescents. Moreover, traumatic past experiences have been identified in affecting the mental health of adolescents. Thus, it is imperative to destigmatize mental health and offer support to adolescents, aiding them for a healthy life and subsequently, mitigating mental health cases amongst adolescents.

Key Terms:

Mental health: It is emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act.¹

Mitigate: To reduce something or make something less severe.

Adolescents: The age where a child develops into an adult. Adolescents are typically from the age 10-19.

Anxiety: Constant feeling of concern, nervousness, or an uneasy feeling about an uncertain consequence.

Depression: is a mental health condition which results in constantly feeling low and brings a sudden loss of interest in your favorite activities or hobbies.²

Stigma: Collective disapproval from society.

Fear of missing out (FOMO): Refers to the feeling or interpretation that other people are having fun or experiencing new things or having a better life than you³.

¹ *About Mental Health* . 2023, www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm#:~:text=Mental%20health%20includes%20our%20emotional,others%2C%20and%20make%20healthy%20choices. Accessed 25 Dec. 2023.

² Clinic, Cleveland. "Clinical Depression (Major Depressive Disorder): Symptoms." *Cleveland Clinic*, 2022, my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/24481-clinical-depression-major-depressive-disorder. Accessed 25 Dec. 2023.

³ Clinic, Cleveland. "FOMO Is Real: How the Fear of Missing out Affects Your Health." *Cleveland Clinic*, Cleveland Clinic, 23 Aug. 2023, health.clevelandclinic.org/understanding-fomo. Accessed 17 Jan. 2024.

Background Information:

Mental health is a broad term, as mental health can be divided into many subcategories, however, the emphasis here will be on anxiety and depression. As mentioned earlier, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the cases of mental health significantly rose. In 2019 nearly a billion people were suffering from mental health problems⁴ and the first year of the pandemic, globally the cases of anxiety and depression increased by 25%⁵. In 2021, globally, one in six adolescents suffered from mental health illness⁶.

Adolescence is a critical stage of life for mental health. During this age period, one's body goes through rapid growth and development that takes place in the brain. Adolescents “*acquire cognitive and social-emotional skills that help in shaping their mental health*”⁷. In addition to this, in this technological era, adolescents heavily utilize social media, which acts as another contributing factor to their emotional, and psychological thoughts. Moreover, a traumatizing past also affects their mental state in the future and how they are able to handle situations.

Fortunately, during and after the pandemic people started becoming aware of mental health issues and how it is equally as important as one's physical well-being. Consequently, many are becoming more aware of prioritizing their mental health, and many programs are established for those who need extra help and support. However, there is still a stigma revolving around the ‘concept’ of mental health. This is an obstacle faced by many adolescents. Adolescents often find it difficult to talk to their parents or guardians about their emotions or mental state because of the stigma that revolves around it. Some stigmas surrounding mental health associates with being ‘possessed’, ‘crazy’ or ‘dangerous’. Due to these stigmas and the feeling of loneliness, it often pushes adolescents towards behaviors such as alcoholism, substance addiction, or even commit suicide.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved:

United States

United States granted the investments and programs to help mitigate mental health amongst

⁴ World. “WHO Highlights Urgent Need to Transform Mental Health and Mental Health Care.” *Who.int*, World Health Organization: WHO, 17 June 2022, www.who.int/news/item/17-06-2022-who-highlights-urgent-need-to-transform-mental-health-and-mental-health-care. Accessed 25 Dec. 2023.

⁵ World. “COVID-19 Pandemic Triggers 25% Increase in Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression Worldwide.” *Who.int*, World Health Organization: WHO, 2 Mar. 2022, www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide. Accessed 26 Dec. 2023.

⁶ World. “Mental Health of Adolescents.” *Who.int*, World Health Organization: WHO, 17 Nov. 2021, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health. Accessed 25 Dec. 2023.

⁷ “Child and Adolescent Mental and Brain Health.” *Who.int*, 2023, www.who.int/activities/improving-the-mental-and-brain-health-of-children-and-adolescents. Accessed 27 Dec. 2023.

adolescents⁸

Denmark

Denmark prioritizes comprehensive healthcare services, social support, and emphasizes on reducing stigma. They are doing this by ‘early intervention’ where they are introducing mental health in schools. They have also established an app, MindApps.dk, which is accessible to anyone facing mental challenges. Additionally, they also offer another app, Livslinien, which is a suicide prevention app.⁹

World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO collaborates with Member States and partners with the goal of improving the mental health of a large group individuals. Including, promoting mental well-being, preventing mental disorders, and applying efforts to increase the accessibility of quality mental health care. In 2019, WHO introduced the ‘*WHO Special Initiative for Mental Health (2019-2023): Universal Health Coverage for Mental Health*’ to ensure that affordable, accessible and quality care is provided to more than 100 million people in 12 prioritized countries.¹⁰

Relevant UN resolutions:

- [A/HRC/32/32](#) - This resolution is the “*right to mental health in adolescents*”¹¹
- [A/HRC/RES/36/13](#) - This resolution calls for the recognition of the “*importance of integrating mental health services into primary and general health care*”¹²
- [A/HRC/RES/43/13](#) - This resolution “*calls on States to promote a paradigm shift in mental health and to adopt, implement, update, strengthen or monitor, as appropriate, all existing laws, policies and practices*”¹³

Previous attempts to solve the issue:

United States

⁸ for, Secretary. “Biden-Harris Administration Announces More than \$200 Million to Support Youth Mental Health.” *HHS.gov*, 25 Sept. 2023, www.hhs.gov/about/news/2023/09/25/biden-harris-administration-announces-more-than-200-million-support-youth-mental-health.html#:~:text=The%20investments%20include%20the%20following,mental%20health%20care%20in%20schools. Accessed 25 Dec. 2023.

⁹ *Healthcare Denmark*. healthcaredenmark.dk/media/hwqj2a14/thedanishapproachtomentalhealth_2ndedition_2023.pdf.

¹⁰ (“Mental Health of Adolescents”)

¹¹ “The Right to Mental Health.” *OHCHR*, 2017, www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-health/right-mental-health#:~:text=The%20right%20to%20mental%20health%20at%20the%20Human%20Rights%20Council&text=In%20July%202016%2C%20Human%20Rights,while%20promoting%20inclusion%20and%20participation. Accessed 25 Dec. 2023.

¹² (“The Right to Mental Health”)

¹³ (“The Right to Mental Health”)

In 2014, United States launched the “*Before Stage 4 (#B4Stage4)*”. This campaign was focused on prevention and early identification of any signs of mental health illness. Eventually, in 2016 they also launched the “*Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act*”, with the goal of prioritizing hospitalization and court-ordered treatment and addressing mental health regardless of its severity.¹⁴

Denmark

Denmark has continuously been working towards developing and improving the mental health and the care provided. Multiple measures have been implemented but they all have been temporary or sporadically. Despite implementing the measures, they have not been regularly monitoring its success.¹⁵

World Health Organization (WHO)

In 2013, WHO created a resolution to adopt a plan for mental health:

- ‘1. *ADOPTS the comprehensive mental health action plan 2013–2020;1*
2. *URGES Member States to implement the proposed actions for Member States in the comprehensive mental health action plan 2013–2020 as adapted to national priorities and specific national circumstances;*
3. *INVITES international, regional and national partners to take note of the comprehensive mental health action plan 2013–2020;*
4. *REQUESTS the Director-General to implement the actions for the Secretariat in the comprehensive mental health action plan 2013–2020 and to submit reports on the progress achieved in implementing the action plan, through the Executive Board, to the Sixty-eighth, Seventy-first and Seventy-fourth World Health Assemblies.*’¹⁶

Possible solutions:

In order to mitigate mental health amongst adolescents, countries and organizations should continue with providing affordable and accessible care for those with mental health issues:

1. This could be with either having centers, brochures, apps, or counsellors. It is vital that people living in rural or remote areas also have access to care. Governments of each country should also ensure that schools and workplaces are getting educated and informed about mental health and a counselor should be present in such places.
2. In addition, social clubs could be offered for adolescents. Social clubs give them an

¹⁴ “Our History.” *Mental Health America*, 2014, mhanational.org/our-history#2010's. Accessed 28 Dec. 2023.

¹⁵ *Strengthening Mental Health Care Recommendations for a 10-Year Action Plan in Denmark -Short Version*. www.sst.dk/-/media/Udgivelser/2022/psykiatriplan/KORT_10AARS_PSYK-PLAN_100122_EN_11-maj.ashx?sc_lang=da&hash=3FC48B92B08DB0218158A975402CD0DB.

¹⁶ World. “WHO MiNDbank - Resolution WHA66.8 Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020.” *Who.int*, 2013, extranet.who.int/mindbank/item/3042. Accessed 28 Dec. 2023.

opportunity to meet with peers of similar ages and who can share relatable experiences. This setting allows them to openly share their feelings with one another and creates a sense of comfort knowing that they are not alone on the journey.

Although mental health cases will never be able to zero, but if these solutions are followed, mental health cases in adolescents and in general older age groups will decrease significantly and allow them to live a healthy life.

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