



## Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (SOCHUM)

### *Topic 2: The allocation of resources for youth mental health*

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### 1. Definition of Key Terms

**allocation of resources:** the process of distributing available resources among different individuals, groups, or activities. It involves making decisions on how to effectively and efficiently allocate resources such as money, time, materials, and labor to reach the needs of minorities.

**Least Developed Countries (LDCs):** a classification used by the United Nations to identify the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries. LDCs are characterized by low income levels, limited human resources, and high levels of economic instability..

**Youth Mental Health:** the state of mental well-being often linked to social, psychological and cultural environments, especially regarding young individuals. A significant lack of a mentally and emotionally stable situation can compromise any task of life and it might lead to health conditions such as depression, drug addiction, eating disorders, etc.

**World Health Organization (WHO):** a specialized branch of the United Nations responsible for international public health. It also has the leadership on international means regarding health emergencies and supplies.

**United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF):** a specific agency of the United Nations which aims at the protection of children's rights. It manages humanitarian aid destined to the infant field often given by voluntary donations from governments, organizations and individuals. It also includes healthcare, education, hygiene and emergency support.

### 2. Introduction

Mental health has consistently been a global concern, regarded as critically important to overall well-being on par with physical health. However, the persistence of stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health issues remains a significant challenge. Efforts and resources allocated to this area vary across countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that only about 7.7% of global health funds are dedicated to mental health, indicating a tendency to neglect

this field compared to other health sectors. Limited or absent access to mental health services in many parts of the world is often rooted in economic or political concerns. Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed a notable increase in awareness. The lockdowns prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic have left a profound societal and cultural impact, revealing a substantial decline in individuals' psychological well-being. Notably, mental health concerns among young people, a facet often avoided or ignored, have come to the forefront. Various factors, including academic stress, social pressure, family issues, traumas, and bullying, contribute to mental health challenges faced by young people. These challenges can significantly impact their emotional, psychological, and social functioning. Prioritizing the mental health of young individuals is essential for two main reasons: firstly, it can have enduring effects on their overall well-being, and secondly, young people play a pivotal role in shaping the future society, making healthy minds integral to creating healthy environments.

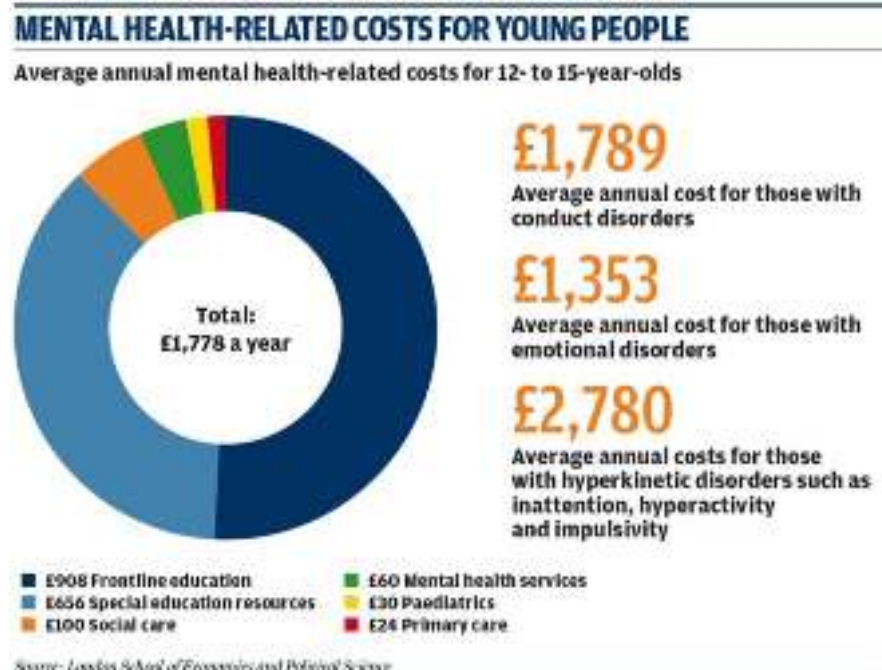
### 3. Background Information

Adolescence stands out as a pivotal period for the formation of social and emotional habits, making it imperative to prioritize mental health care during this phase. Teenagers navigate a multitude of stress-inducing situations, including exposure to adversity, peer pressure, and the exploration of their own identity. These challenges can not only induce stress during this critical growth period but also lead to more severe disorders such as anxiety, depression, and conduct disorders.

According to WHO data, in the age range of 10 to 14 years old, 3.6% experience anxiety, while 1.1% grapple with depression. In the slightly older age group of 15 to 19 years old, the global prevalence of serious anxiety problems increases to 4.6%, and the incidence of depression rises to 2.8%.

Unfortunately, depression has become more common, especially post the COVID-19 pandemic, and can escalate into more significant problems, including suicide. Shockingly, suicide ranks as the fourth leading cause of death among older adolescents aged 15-19. Globally, between 2016 and 2020, cases of depression in individuals aged 3 to 17 years increased by 27%.

Recent years have also witnessed a rise in the percentage of young people diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Presently, it affects 3.1% of children aged 10 to 14 and 2.4% of individuals aged 15 to 19. Additionally, engaging in risk-taking behaviors, such as alcohol and cannabis consumption and interpersonal violence, is not uncommon. WHO's research in 2016



indicated that 13.6% of adolescents, primarily males, between 10 and 19 years old had consumed alcohol, while in 2018, 4.7% of 15-16-year-olds had used cannabis. In general, a National Library of Medicine (USA) research suggests that 15% of teenagers have encountered a mental health disorder. Given the widespread prevalence of mental health disorders, constituting a significant global challenge, it becomes imperative to allocate adequate resources, particularly for the mental

well-being of young individuals. According to a UNICEF survey, merely 2.1% of government health

expenditure globally is directed towards mental health. Recognizing the urgency of addressing youth mental health collectively, the Global Coalition for Youth Mental Health was established in 2022, spearheaded by UNICEF. This organization not only focuses on raising awareness on this critical issue but also actively works towards increasing investments, both private and public, in programs dedicated to enhancing youth mental health.

#### 4. Major Countries Involved

- **Sweden:** Sweden demonstrates a commitment to youth mental health through substantial investments in both research and support programs. Organizations such as the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare actively contribute to the equitable distribution of psychological healthcare resources across the nation. Notably, Sweden's approach extends to school-based initiatives, where adolescents have legal access to psychologists and psychiatrists within educational institutions.
- **Australia:** Australia offers an extensive array of services catering to youth mental health, emphasizing early intervention and support for individuals aged 12 to 25. The government has significantly increased its investment in programs like the Youth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan, channeling resources into initiatives dedicated to the mental well-being of adolescents.
- **Canada:** In 2013, Canada established Youth Mental Health Canada (YMHC), an association dedicated to empowering students, families, educators, community workers, and mental health professionals. YMHC provides educational resources focused on mental wellness and has recently expanded its efforts by developing educator-created learning content and tools for mental wellness support and education.
- **United Kingdom:** The UK government has prioritized enhancing mental health services for young people. Strategic initiatives, such as the NHS (National Health Services) Long Term Plan, are geared towards allocating resources to improve access to mental health support for children and young individuals. The focus extends to school-based programs and community services.

#### 5. UN Involvement

The United Nations has taken significant steps to address the mental health crisis by aiming to reform the mental health system and implement long-term visionary programs. Notably, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Special Initiative for Mental Health in 2019, with a primary focus on integrating mental health into universal health coverage (UHC). This initiative places special emphasis on vulnerable groups, particularly children and adolescents. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the program has been reinforced, providing governments with a comprehensive and impactful strategy to tackle the rising challenges of mental health disorders exacerbated by COVID-19.

#### 6. Useful Links

- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(18\)30091-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(18)30091-9/fulltext)

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychiatry-through-the-looking-glass/202310/world-health-organisation-and-un-unite-on-mental>
- <https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health>
- [The Global Coalition for Youth Mental Health | UNICEF](#)
- [Measuring mental health for adolescents and young people at the population level - UNICEF DATA](#)
- [Home Page: Journal of Adolescent Health \(jahonline.org\)](#)
- <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/research/article/youth-mental-health-new-economic-evidence>