

## YOUTH'S MENTAL HEALTH

*by:*  
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Adolescence is described by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the era of life between the ages of 10 and 19, which is the cornerstone of a person's good health. This is where the rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth is happening. And it can affect how a person feels, thinks, make decisions, and interacts with the world around them. Behavioral patterns are being established at this age; behavior that is related with physical, emotional, spiritual, and other activities that may benefit or harm their health.

Because of the changes such as physical, emotional and social changes, including exposure to poverty, exploitation, or violence that transpire during adolescence, they became prone to mental health issue. Adolescents' health and well-being depend on avoiding adversity, supporting socio-emotional learning and psychological well-being, and ensuring access to mental health care during this stage of their lives.

According to the United Nations Foundations, 89 million teenage boys and 77 million adolescent girls aged 10-19 have a mental disorder, with anxiety and/or depression accounting for 40% of the cases. When the State of the World's Children 2021 looked at the mental health of children and adolescents, data showed that psychosocial distress and poor mental health afflicted far too many children even before the pandemic. In 21 nations, almost one in every five young people aged 15 to 24 reported they are frequently melancholy or have little interest in doing things.

From a cultural and scientific standpoint, youth mental health is the beginning of an overall mental health. Early onset of mental illness, as well as a delay in or lack of access to appropriate interventions, frequently leads to a downward spiral of disadvantage and suffering for young people and their families, eventually leading to

substantial leakage from economic, societal, and social development. Untreated mental illness causes youth to miss out on educational and job prospects, according to the estimate that mental diseases account for 60% to 70% of disability-adjusted life years among young people.

The data collected regarding youth's mental health from various studies is very alarming. Mental health problems impact 10% to 15% of children aged 5 to 15 in the Philippines, while 16.8% of Filipino adolescent aged 13 to 17 attempted suicide at least once in the year prior to the 2015 Global School-based Student Health survey.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Department of Education (DepEd) offered help to at least 600 of its personnel nationwide to learn more about Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) and Psychological First Aid (PFA). Since physical distance measures and required health standards are being implemented, DepEd used Remote Psychological First Aid as a tool to help learners and professionals cope with the situation for the school year 2020-2021. The said mechanism is based on the principles of Psychological First Aid: look, listen, and link.

In addition, to further strengthen the role of parents and teachers as the education frontline amid COVID-19 pandemic, the DepEd led a series of Psychosocial Support and Training for parents, teachers, school heads and selected DepEd region and division non-teaching personnel before the opening of School Year 2020-2021. Online trainings on the provision of remote PFA for learners using the Supporting, Enabling and Empowering Students (SEES) Manual, supplemental online and self-guided PFA modules, and guidance notes for secondary teachers, school heads and identified DepEd region and division non-teaching personnel, had been launched.

Education sector must be aware of the growing number of mental health issues among youths to effectively identify and address their mental health needs. With continuous implementation of the said program and provision of support to the

personnel who delivers mental health and psychological support services, a greater number of a vigorous youth's mental health could be attained.

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