Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa & The Challenge of Mental Health: Time for Action

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My Focus: Exploring the Critical Link & Needed Action for Improvement

Roadmap for the Lecture

Setting the Stage: Basic Issues in Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Setting the Course: Mental Health in Sub-Saharan Africa

Shaping the Future: Making Education Count for Mental Health

Connecting the Dots: Embracing the Challenge

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Setting the Stage: Basic Issues in Education in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

Education Landscape & Challenges in a "VUCA" World

Pre-COVID-19 era   COVID-19 era   Post-COVID-19 era ("Pandemic Age")

"KNOWN KNOWN"

✔ Access

✔ Cost

✔ Quality

✔ Relevance

✔ Quality

KNOWN UNKNOWN

✔ Educational system effect
❖ Resilience
❖ Responsiveness

✔ Collateral effects (e.g. psycho-social)

"UNKNOWN UNKNOWN"

"Whole society" and potentially stronger intersectoral effects

*VUCA: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity

Tertiary education is key in national and global developmental agenda & transformation

"As the world seeks to build back better into a new era of green and equitable economic growth, **tertiary education systems are at the heart of the big transformations required throughout economies and societies. Tertiary education is vital for the development of human capital and innovation**. Strategic and effective investments in tertiary education can serve every country – from the poorest to the richest – by developing its talent and leadership pool, generating and applying knowledge to local and global challenges, and participating in the global knowledge economy" – World Bank, 2022

EDUCATION

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Tertiary Education and Its Impacts

Tertiary education contributes to social and economic development through four major missions:

- Formation of human capital (*primarily through teaching*);

- Building of knowledge bases (*primarily through research*);

- Dissemination and use of knowledge (*primarily through interactions with knowledge users*);

- Maintenance of knowledge (*inter-generational storage and transmission of knowledge*).

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Tertiary Education and its Challenges in SSA

Tertiary Education system in SSA has expanded but faces critical challenges:
- Inadequate funding
- Quality and global competitiveness
- Equity issue
- Link with the industry/labour market
- Relevance & research impact

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Education in sub-Saharan Africa: *Sobering legacy, and Persisting Challenges*:

An Overlooked Issue:
… The Mental Health Dimension

Tertiary Education Contributes Positively to Mental Health

The availability of tertiary education, including universities, vocational schools, research laboratories, and nursing schools, is a staple of developed, high-functioning societies. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development declared that education is the key for achieving all 17 Goals outlined in the report (UN General Assembly 71st Session, 2017). The transition from developing to developed countries comes in conjunction with tertiary education, as well-educated people are more equipped to deal with economic shock, are more employable, and more likely to facilitate innovation in their home country (The World Bank, 2017). Tertiary education has proven to be essential for the sustainable development of both the individual and society   - *World Bank, 2017*

UMUNC 2020 Issue Brief for
GA Third Committee (SOCHUM)

**Enhancing Tertiary Education to
Help Solve Global Development Challenges**

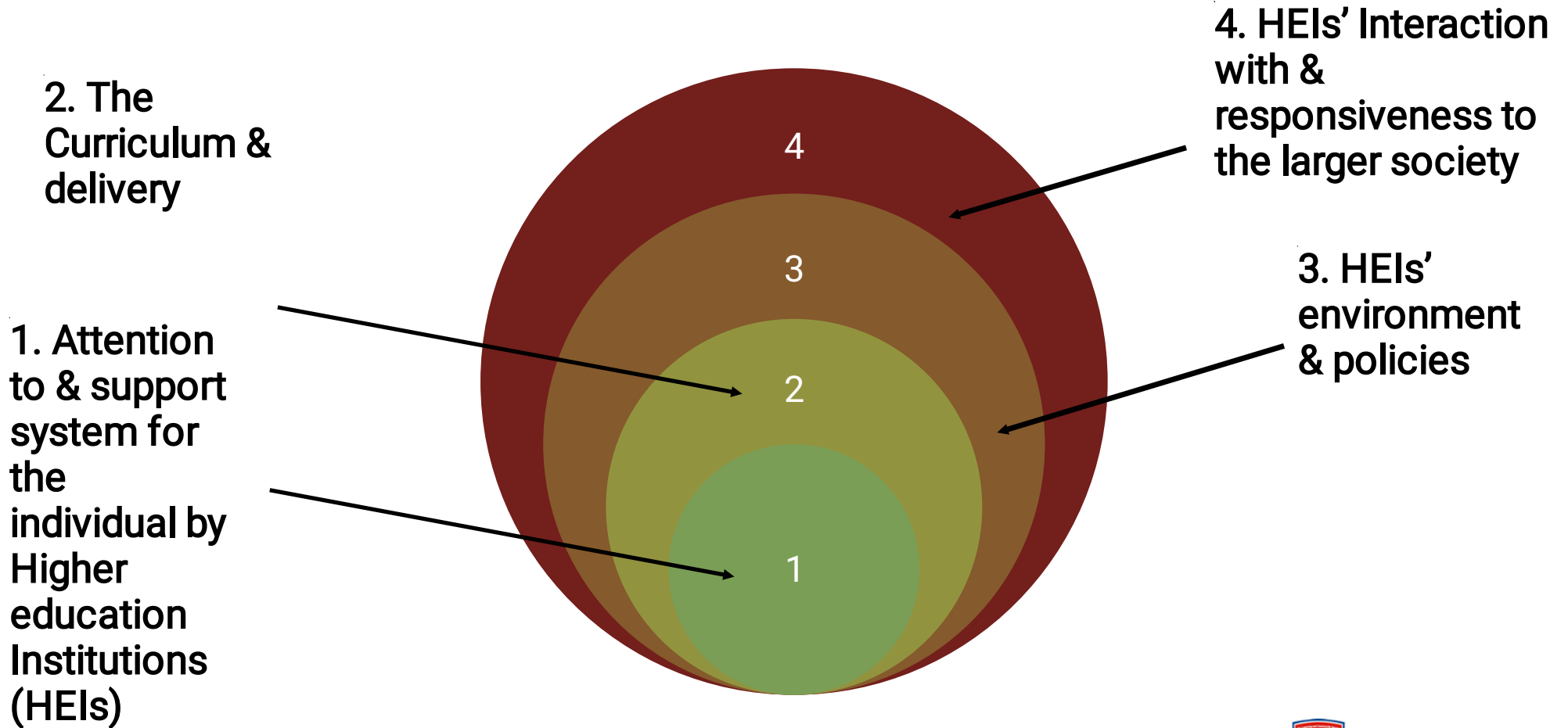by Anna Glass and Petra Szonyegi
ODU United Nations Society

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Education & Mental Health: The "Dark" Side

"The current status of our university students' mental health is nothing short of a tragedy. Learning — in its truest essence — is supposed to be a fulf lling life-long journey of exploration, discovery, and self-improvement.... There are so many global grand challenges, calling out to young leaders and innovators to solve them. But how many of us can say that for the most part, our formal education was exciting, fulf lling and empowering? How many of us would come home from school or university feeling invigorated? How many of us were truly happy at school?"

ii

Kondirolli & Sunder, 2022).

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How Education System is Failing Mental Health

2. The Curriculum & delivery

4. HEIs' Interaction with & responsiveness to the larger society

1. Attention to & support system for the individual by Higher education Institutions (HEIs)

3. HEIs' environment & policies

4

3

2

1

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Fundamentals: Mental Health in Sub-Saharan Africa

Mental Health.....

- Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, to realize their abilities, to learn well and work well, and to contribute to their community. Mental Health is an integral component of health and well-being and is more than the absence of mental disorder – WHO, 2022

- Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices – CDC

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Mental Health is NOT a Binary State .....
It Exists on a Complex Continuum

Mental health is not a binary state: we are not either mentally healthy or mentally ill.

Rather, mental health exists on a complex continuum with experiences ranging from an optimal state of well-being to debilitating states of great suffering and emotional pain.

So mental health is not defined by the presence or absence of mental disorder
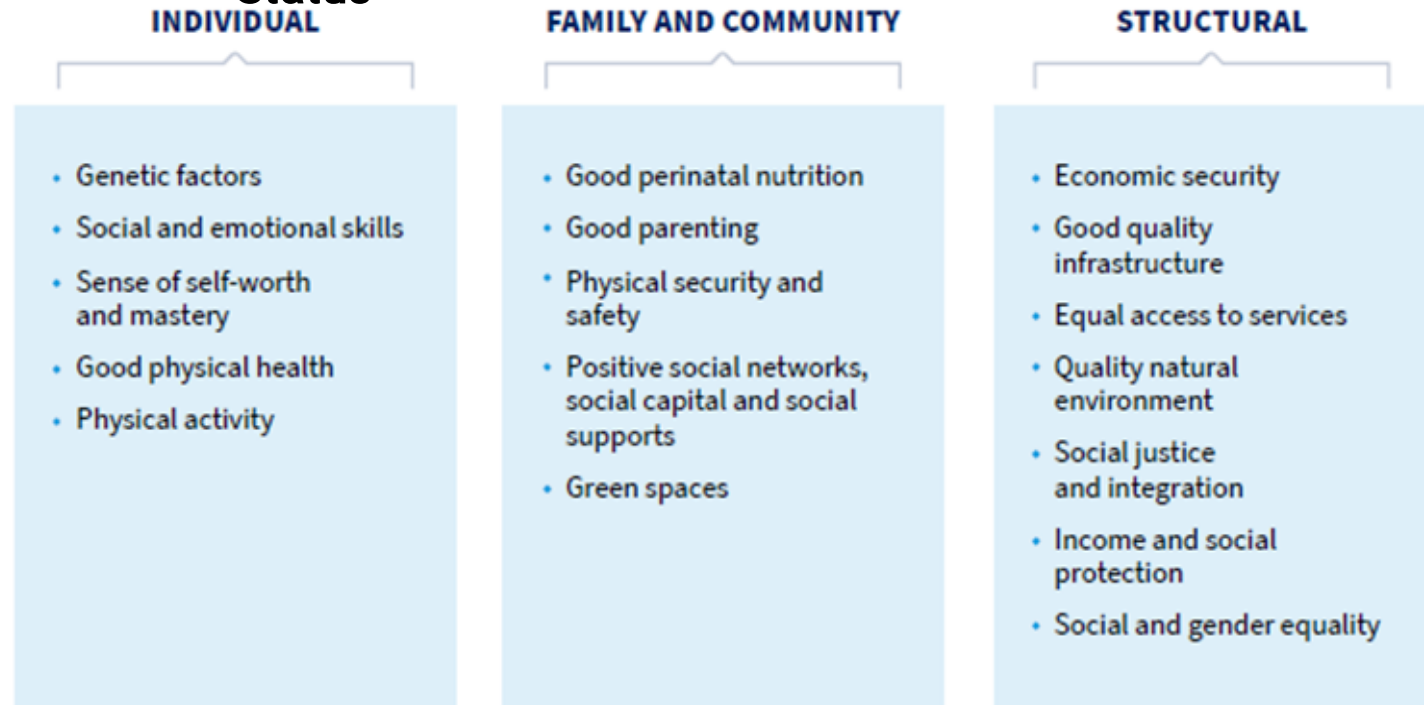
– WHO, 2022

HIGH LEVEL OF MENTAL WELL-BEING

A person with no mental health condition is more likely to experience higher levels of mental well-being

A person with mental health conditions can still experience high levels of mental well-being

NO SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

SEVERE SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

A person with no mental health condition can still experience low levels of mental well-being

A person with mental health conditions is more likely to experience lower levels of mental well-being

LOW LEVEL OF MENTAL WELL-BEING

Relationship between mental well-being and symptoms of mental health conditions

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Mental Health Matters

- 13% of global population (about 970 million people in 2019; 52.4% females) living with mental disorder

- Prevalence of mental disorder in Africa was 10.9% in 2019

- Mental Health is a leading cause of death and disability, and poor functioning

### Multiple Factors Contribute to Mental Health Status

INDIVIDUAL

- Genetic factors
- Social and emotional skills
- Sense of self-worth and mastery
- Good physical health
- Physical activity

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

- Good perinatal nutrition
- Good parenting
- Physical security and safety
- Positive social networks, social capital and social supports
- Green spaces

STRUCTURAL

- Economic security
- Good quality infrastructure
- Equal access to services
- Quality natural environment
- Social justice and integration
- Income and social protection
- Social and gender equality

Mental Health: Adolescence is a Critical Period

- Most mental health conditions in adults have their onset by adolescence.

- Adolescence is a developmentally sensitive time for mental health & a crucial period for developing the social and emotional skills, habits and coping strategies

- Many risk behaviours, such as substance use starts during adolescence.

- Suicide is a leading cause of death in adolescents (contributes about 8% of adolescent deaths globally).

Suicides in 2019 by Age Group

Source: WHO, 2022

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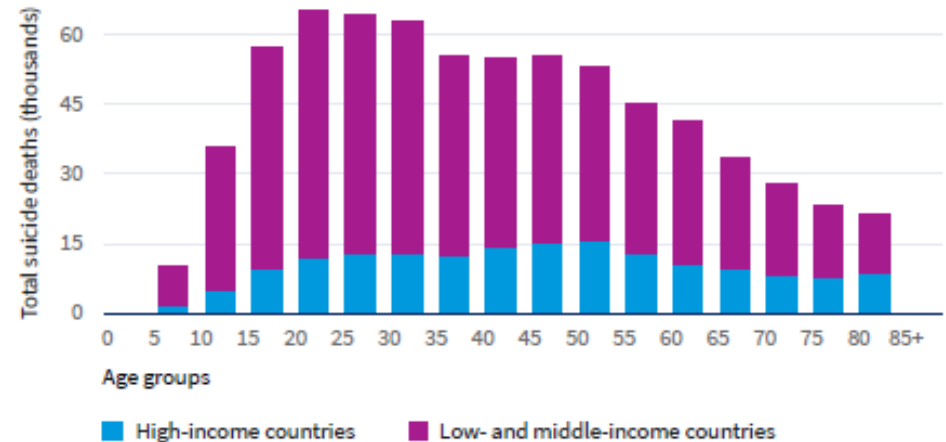
Mental Health Situation in Sub-Saharan Africa:

Today's Challenge;

Tomorrow's Dilemma

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PLOS ONE
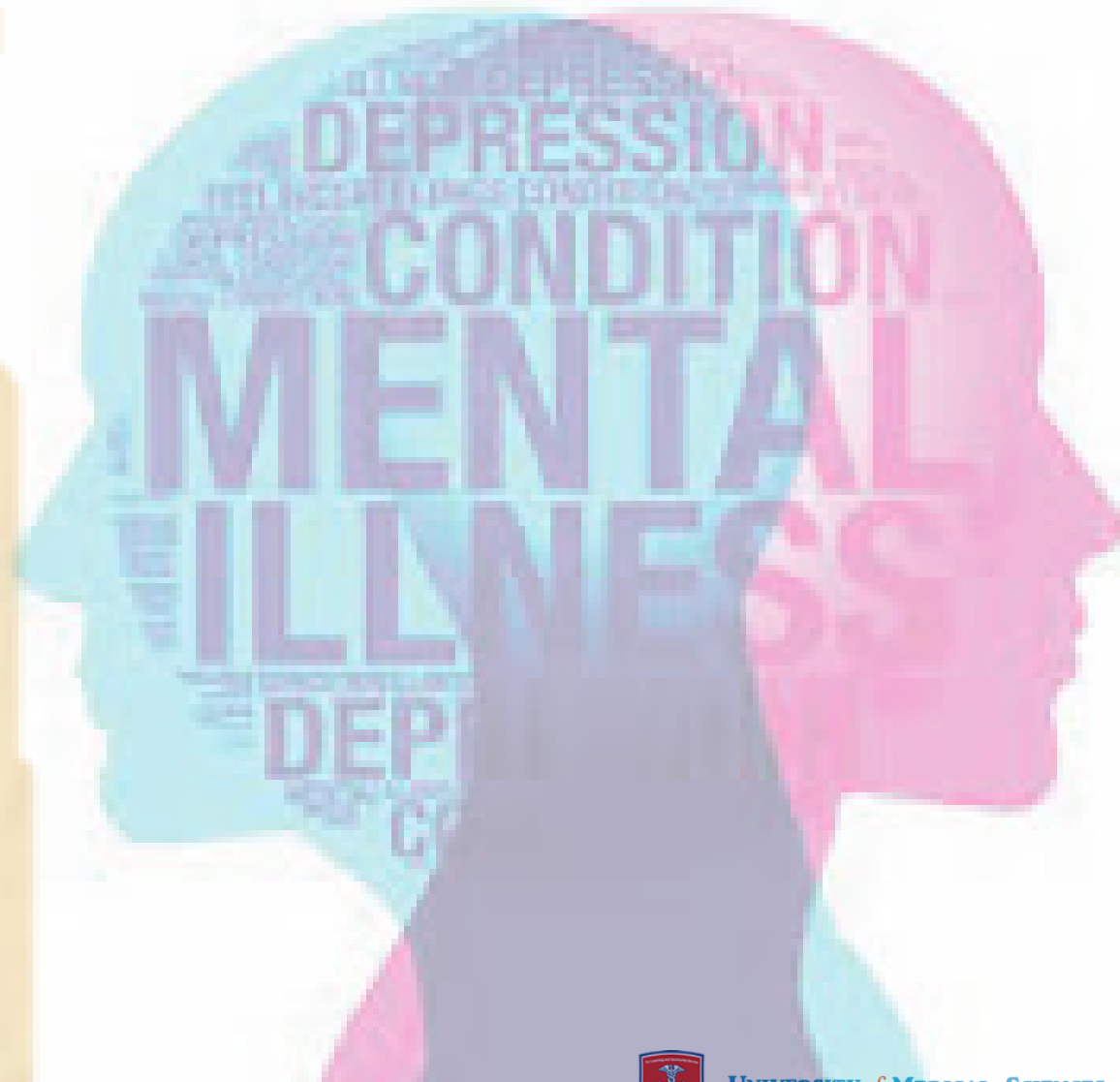
Mental and Substance Use Disorders in Sub-Saharan Africa: Predictions of Epidemiological Changes and Mental Health Workforce Requirements for the Next 40 Years

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Abstract

The world is undergoing a rapid health transition, with an ageing population and disease burden increasingly defined by disability. In Sub-Saharan Africa the next 40 years are predicted to see reduced mortality, signalling a surge in the impact of chronic diseases. We modelled these epidemiological changes and associated mental health workforce requirements. Years lived with a disability (YLD) predictions for mental and substance use disorders for each decade from 2010 to 2050 for four Sub-Saharan African regions were calculated using Global Burden of Disease 2010 study (GBD 2010) data and UN population forecasts. Predicted mental health workforce requirements for 2010 and 2050, by region and for selected countries, were modelled using GBD 2010 prevalence estimates and recommended packages of care and staffing ratios for low- and middle-income countries, and compared to current staffing from the WHO Mental Health Atlas. Significant population growth and ageing will result in an estimated 130% increase in the burden of mental and substance use disorders in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2050, to 45 million YLDs. As a result, the required mental health workforce will increase by 216,600 full time equivalent staff from 2010 to 2050, and far more compared to the existing workforce. The growth in mental and substance use disorders by 2050 is likely to significantly affect health and productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa. To reduce this burden, packages of care for key mental disorders should be provided through increasing the mental health workforce towards targets outlined in this paper. This requires a shift from current practice in most African countries, involving substantial investment in the training of primary care practitioners, supported by district based mental health specialist teams using a task sharing model that mobilises local community resources, with the expansion of inpatient psychiatric units based in district and regional general hospitals.

Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to have an increase of about 130% in its burden of mental and substance use disorders between 2010 & 2050

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Population Continues to Grow Rapidly in the Midst of Increasing Poverty – largest Cohort of Young People with Uncertain Future

Population age distribution in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2010 & 2050.
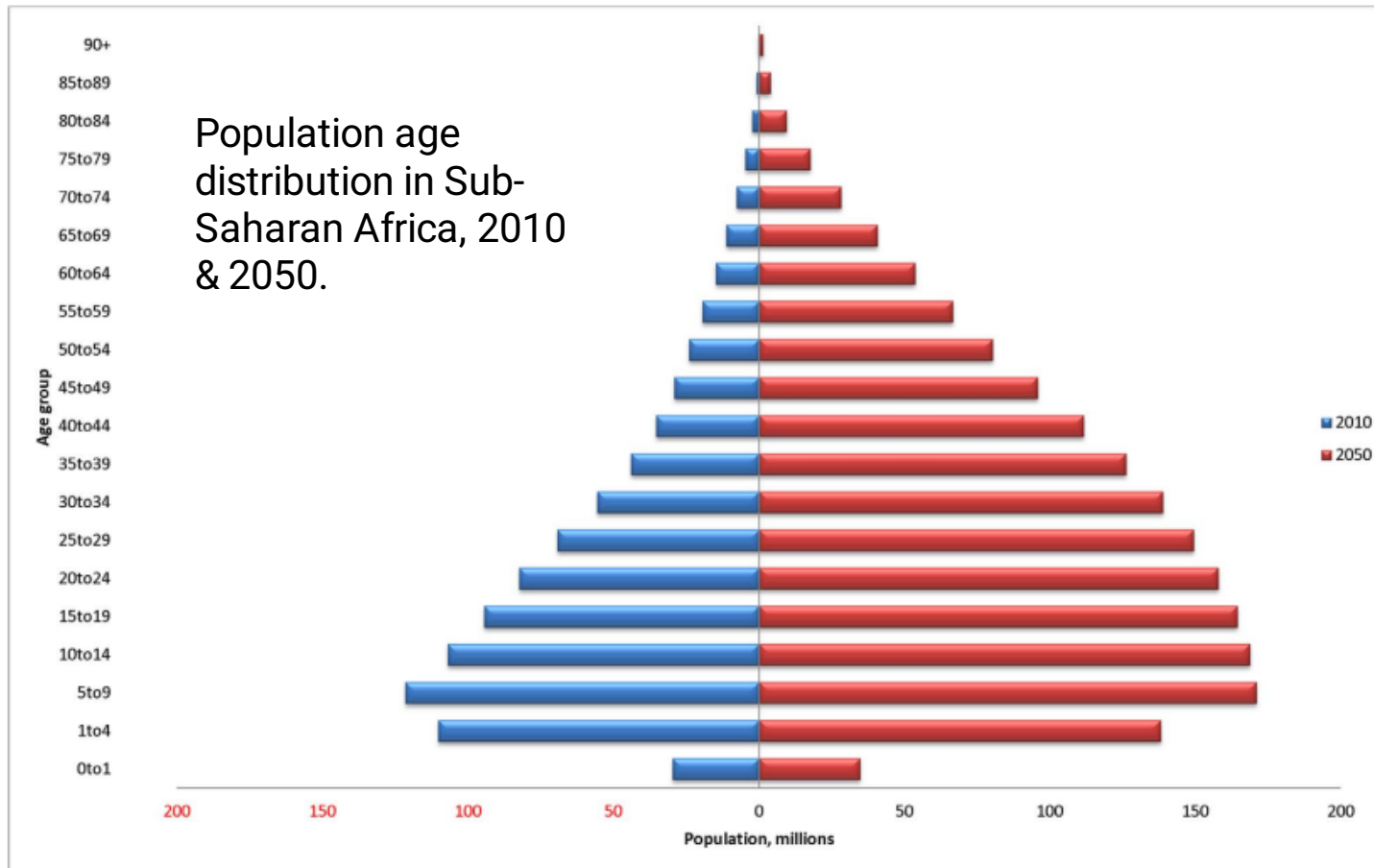
Rapid population growth rate & the associated socio-economic trends are mental health stressors

Data Source: United Nations. Image source: Charlson et al, 2014

Substance Use is an Increasing Challenge Especially among Young people & in Campus Settings
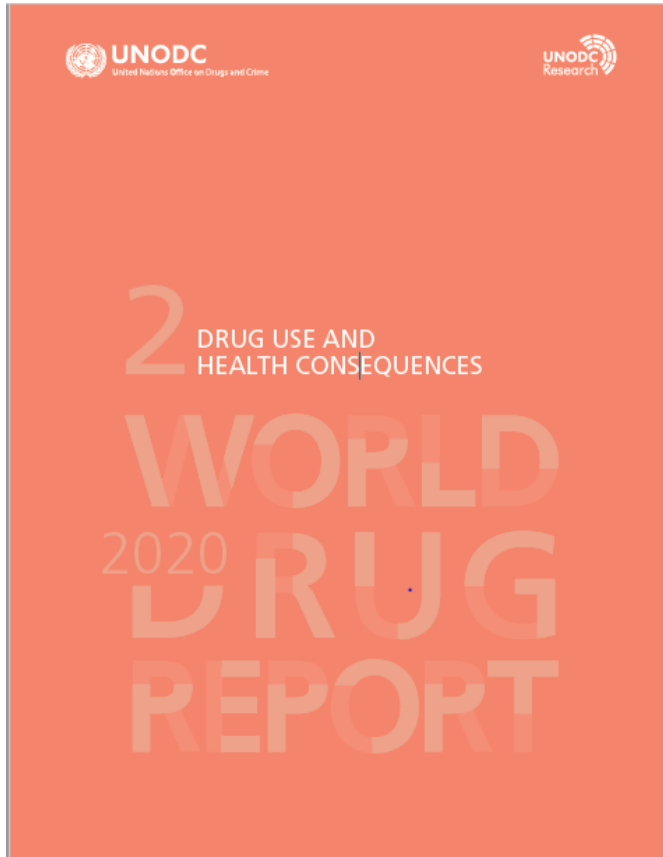
The availability of more potent drugs, the increasing number of substances and their consecutive or sequential use among occasional or regular users pose a greater challenge to the prevention of drug use and the treatment of drug use disorders than in the past – UNODC, 2021

The prevalence of risk factors for mental health disorders is generally growing in SSA

- Poverty
- Humanitarian situations
- Drug use
- Domestic & interpersonal violence
- School-related violence
- Disease outbreaks & disasters
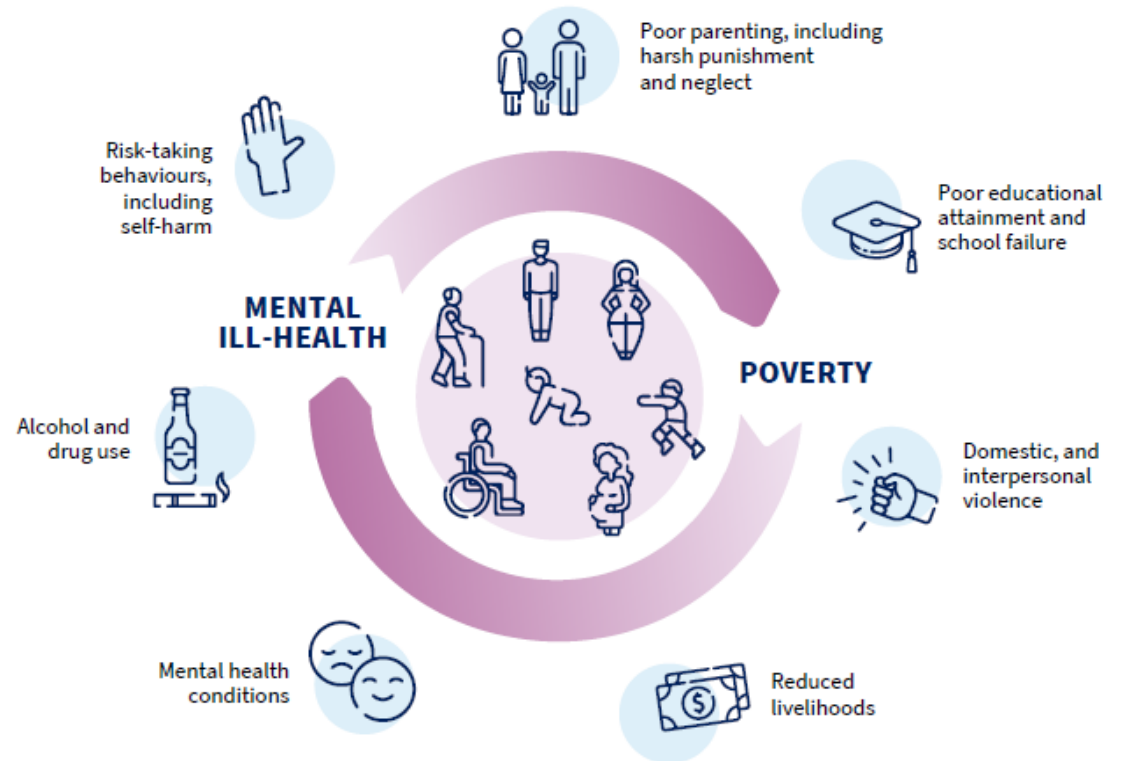
The vicious cycle between poverty and mental ill-health exacerbates mental health conditions

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MENTAL HEALTH ATLAS 2020

World Health Organization

Africa has the Lowest Mean Number of Mental Health Workers per 100,000 Population among the Regions

Mental health workers (median number per 100 000 population), by WHO region
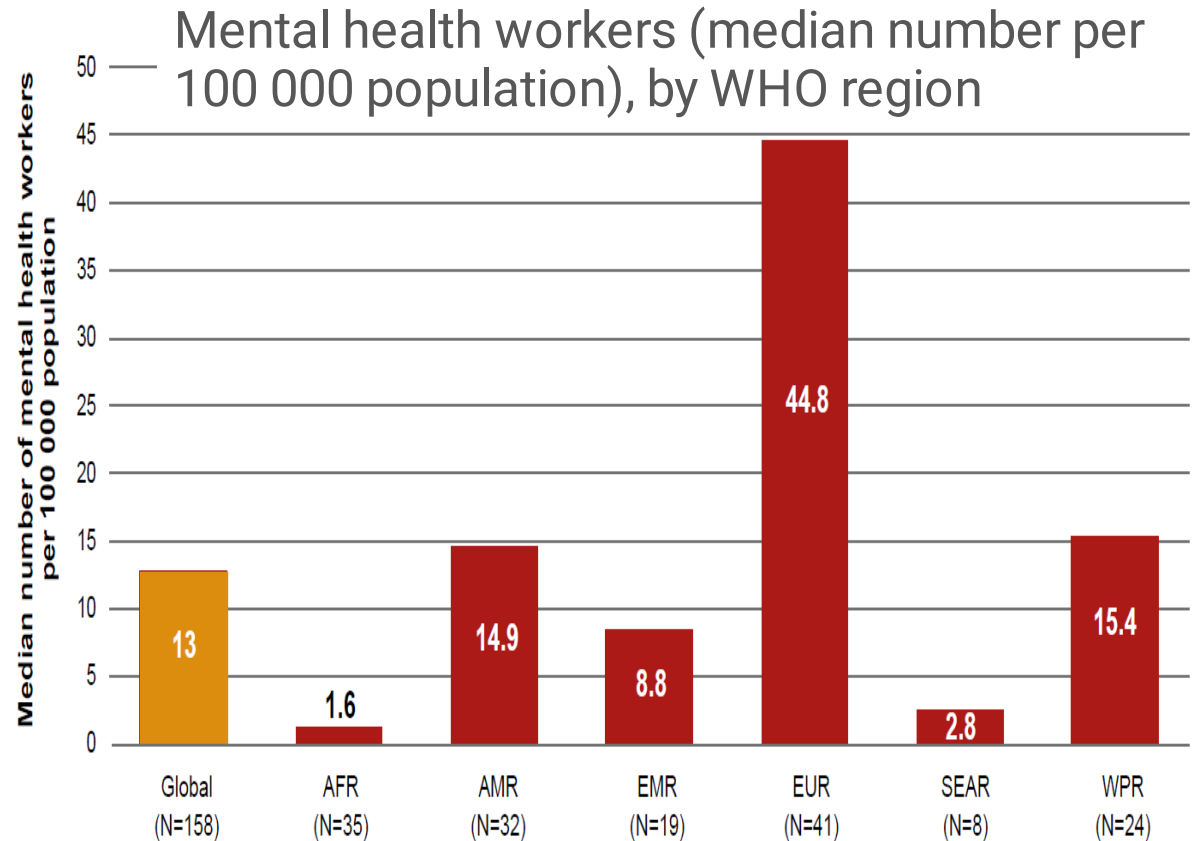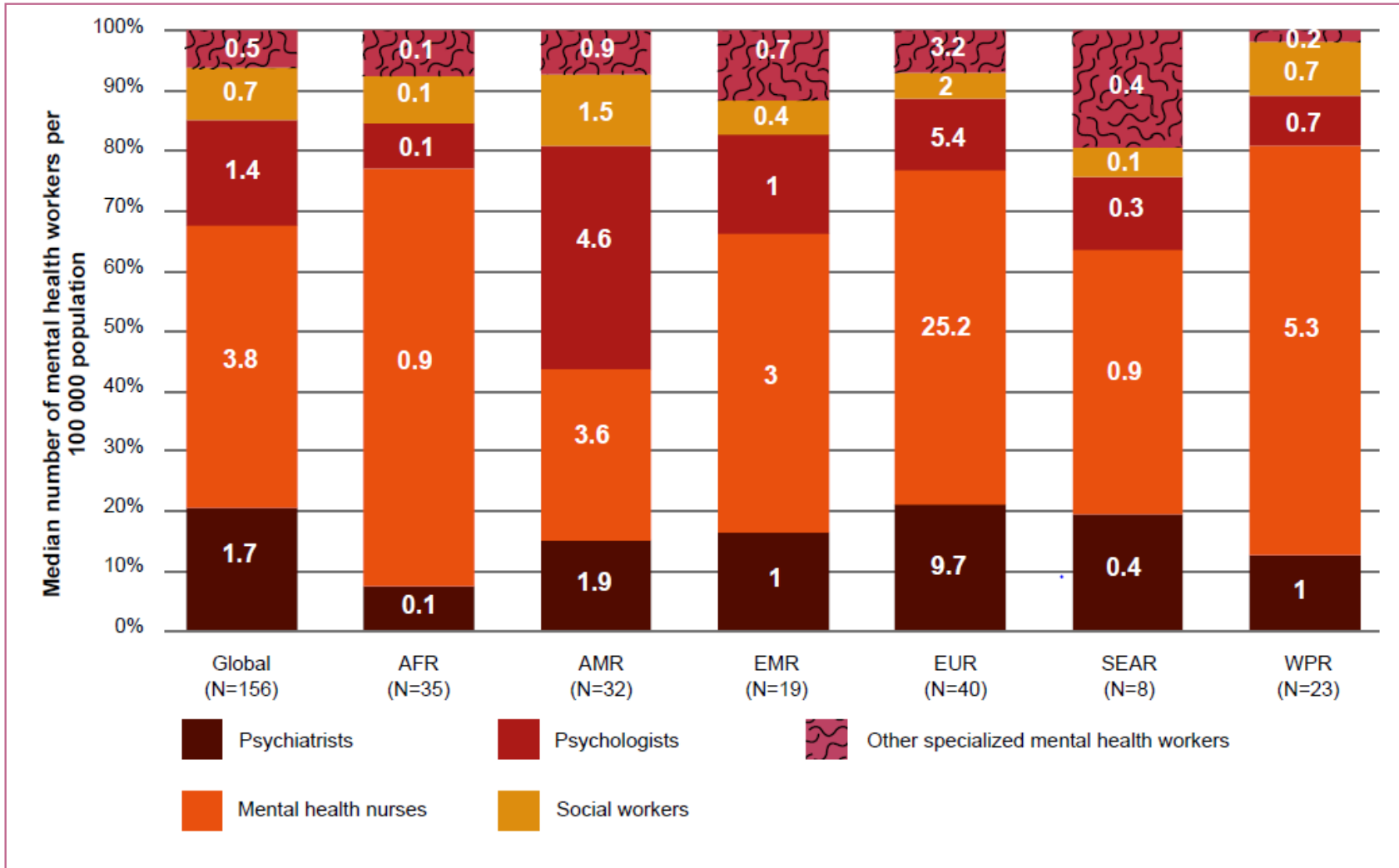
Breakdown of mental health workforce (median number per 100 000 population), by WHO region

WHO 2021 *(Mental Health Atlas, 2020)*

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Africa Lacks Many Categories of Mental Health Workers Despite Expanded Tertiary Education Landscape

Median number of health workers in child and adolescent mental health services per 100 000 population		
	Number of responding countries	Median number of health workers
Global	122	3.4
WHO region		
AFR	26	0.2
AMR	22	8.6
EMR	14	1.0
EUR	35	12.5
SEAR	8	0.9
WPR	17	0.8

"The mental health workforce for children and adolescents across different cadres…was scarce or non-existent for some categories such as speech therapists, occupational therapists and other specialized mental health workers."

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Availability of Mental Health Services in Africa is one of the Poorest among the World's Regions

*Functional integration of mental health into primary care by regions

Global (N=194): 25%
AFR (N=47): 11%
AMR (N=35): 26%
EMR (N=21): 24%
EUR (N=53): 40%
SEAR (N=11): 9%
WPR (N=27): 30%
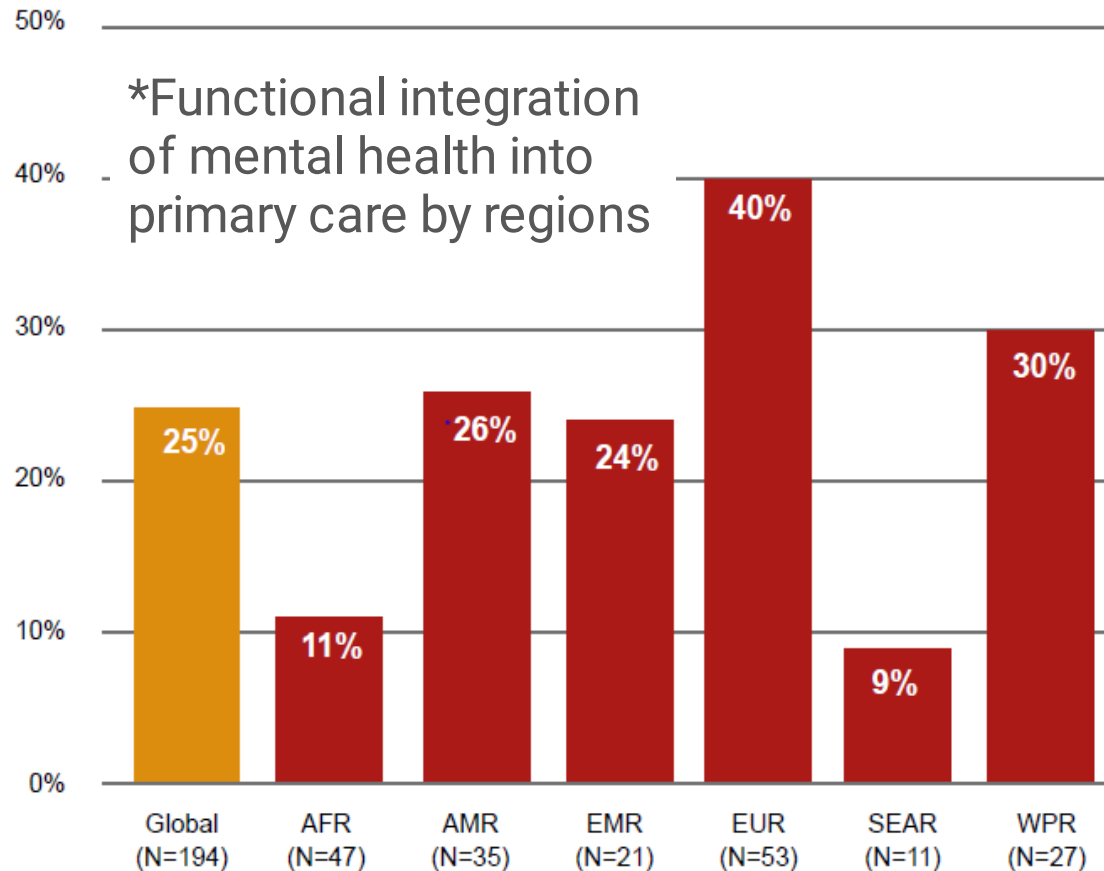
*% fulfilling at least 4/5 WHO indicators

Availability of treatment facilities (hospital & outpatient)			
	Median number per 100,000 population		
	Hospital Facilities	Hospital Beds	Outpatient facilities
Global	0.05	10.8	0.83
AFR	0.16	3.7	0.07

Most Individuals in Africa with Mental Health Problems Have to Find the Money to Pay for Needed Services
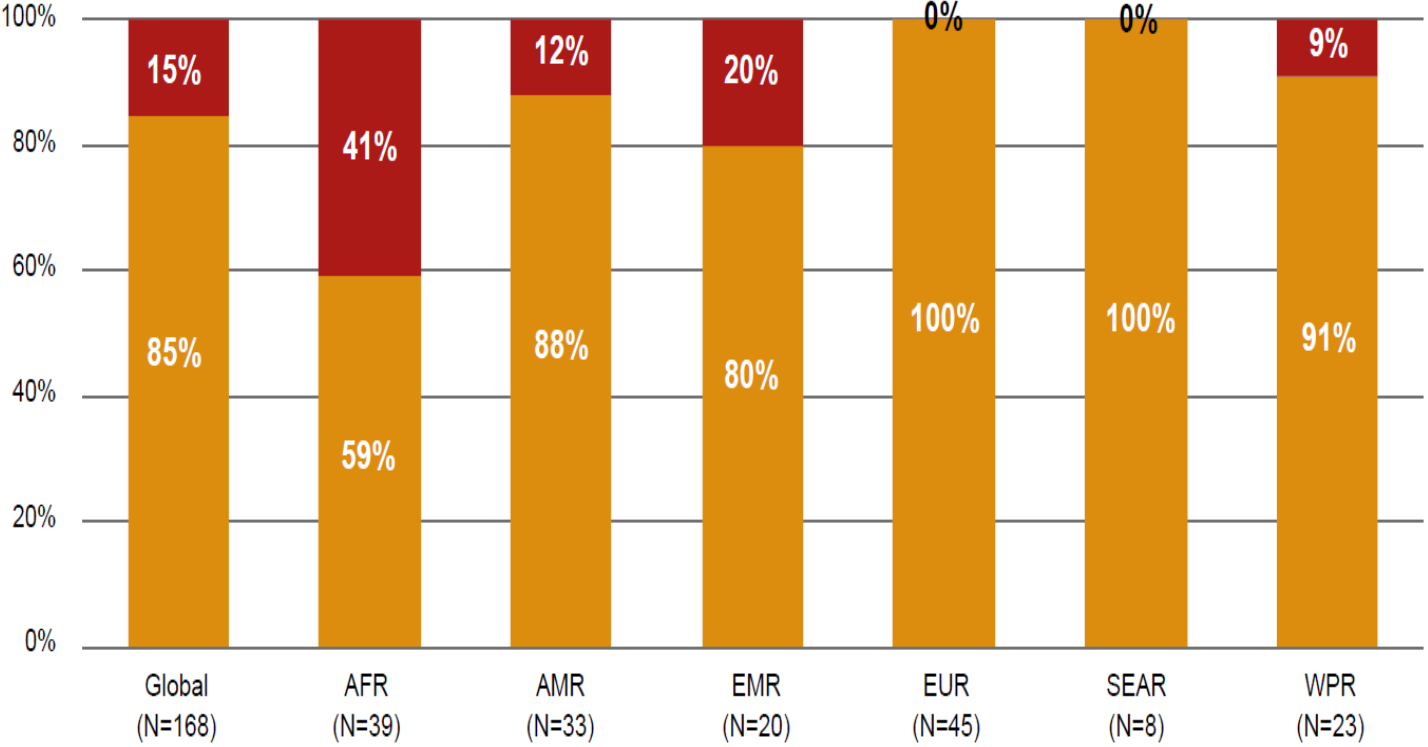
Source of payment for mental health services, by WHO region

Percentage of responding countries where persons pay mostly or entirely out of pocket	Percentage of responding countries where persons pay nothing (fully insured) or at most 20% towards cost

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Women and Young People are More "Left Behind"

66M

Number of women in sub-Saharan Africa who suffer from depression*
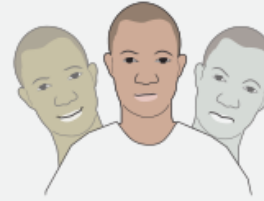
2X

Women are affected at twice the rate of men.

85%

have no access to effective treatment.

1 in 5 adolescents experience mental health issues but they have the poorest healthcare access

Source: https: //www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/08/4-facts-mental-health-africa/

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An African Country Situation

Currently, Mental Illnesses are Common in Sub-Saharan Africa, **BUT** Care is Lacking

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Shaping the Future: Making Education Count for Mental Health

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URGENTLY NEEDED: Reorienting HEI's Mission to Advance Mental Health in SSA

- **Teaching**: *Build relevant capacity of teachers/lecturers, students & school community for competency in mental health literacy; address areas of gaps in human resources for mental health*

- **Research & Research Dissemination:** *Give greater attention to mental health issues, the associated factors & effective responses*

- **Services**: *Use HEIs' platforms to reach the children in primary and secondary schools & the community to enhance mental health protective factors and competencies*
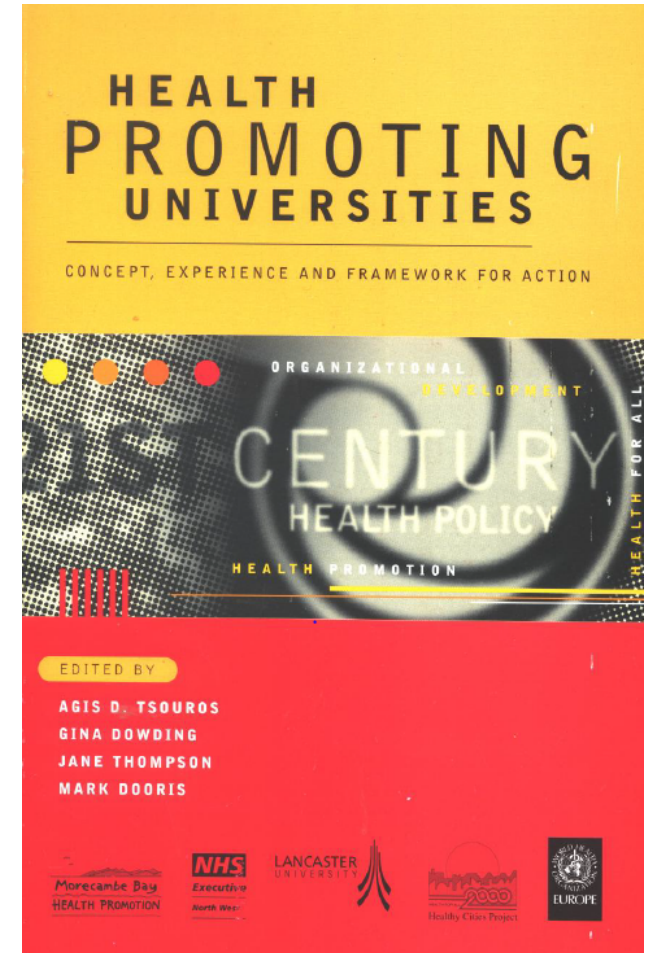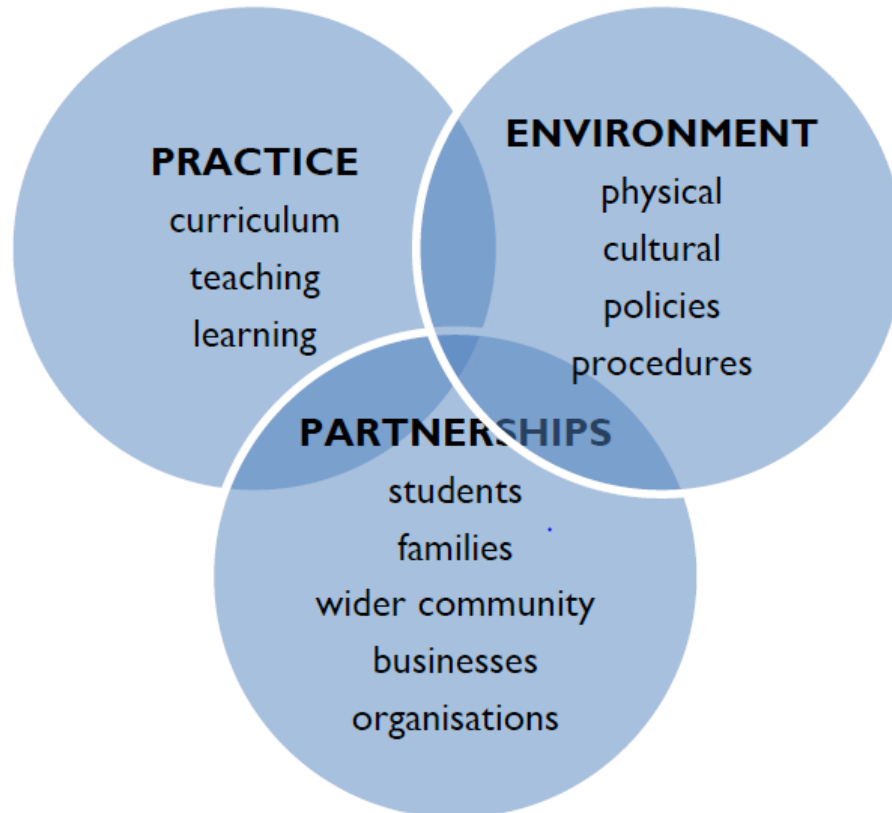
The Health Promoting Schools Framework

PRACTICE
curriculum
teaching
learning

ENVIRONMENT
physical
cultural
policies
procedures

PARTNERSHIPS
students
families
wider community
businesses
organisations

HEALTH PROMOTING UNIVERSITIES
CONCEPT, EXPERIENCE AND FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

EDITED BY
AGIS D. TSOUROS
GINA DOWDING
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MARK DOORIS

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THE UNIMED EXAMPLE

1. PREVENTION & PROMOTION: Drug Education PLUS Drug-testing policy that identifies substance users early and link them with treatment and care

2. CAPACITY-BUILDING: Established Nigeria's 1st Faculty of Medical Rehabilitation & FIVE prgs (including 1st Bachelor of Occupational Therapy, Audiology & Speech Therapy)

3. COMMUNITY-BASED PRG: Sustainable home-grown community health model

4. SCHOOL-TARGETED FOR SCHOOL PUBLICS: Potential for Enhancing Protective Factors

5. ACTION RESEARCH: To generate

Conclusion

Conclusion & Call to Action

"Mental health is critically important to everyone, everywhere. All over the world, mental health needs are high but responses are insufficient and inadequate."

The education sector CAN & SHOULD play a leading and catalytic role in advancing the agenda for improved mental health in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Let's Start the journey today : NOW is the Moment

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.

~Chinese Proverb

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Thank You

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