

An Opportunity for a Revolution in Mental Health Services toward Positive Well-Being

In a recent correspondence, the authors pointed that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an austere impact on the health and wellbeing, especially of the homeless children and youths.^[1] Indeed, the global health crisis has exposed significant gaps in public health that societies must vigorously resolve. It is crucial to consider the social determinants of health to initiate meaningful change in public health. This letter supports the call to address gaps in public health systems, particularly regarding mental health care in developing countries.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the gap between the demand for mental health services and supply has substantially widened especially in the Global South. Hence, communities must ensure that their people have adequate mental health support while navigating these challenging times. In the Philippines, the reshaping of mental health services must include but is not limited to 1) the recognition of mental health, 2) an acute awareness of the influence that culture has on mental health, and formal help-seeking and 3) a robust public-private sector partnership.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had several far-reaching effects, including an upsurge in mental health issues. Lamentably, mental health services are under-resourced globally, especially in low and middle-income countries. For instance, the Philippine government allocates small percentage of its health budget to mental health services.^[2] Such a dismal figure indicates a lack of attention to mental health on the public health agenda. Attention and sufficient funding are necessary in this regard.

The improvement of mental health services should take into account various cultural factors. In the Philippines, there is often stigma attached to mental health. Interestingly, empirical data reveal that many Filipino youths turn to religious coping during difficult times.^[3] Thus, the predominantly Christian culture in the country may facilitate a better understanding of mental health issues among Filipinos.

Providing effective and efficient mental health services is both a public good and a shared objective that requires solid collaboration between the public and private sectors. However, insufficient funding has hindered efforts to close the apparent gap between the population's needs and available services. To fill this gap, several organizations provide free online counseling and psychotherapy to the needy as well as mental health services, psychosocial support, and protection from gender-based violence during

the COVID-19 pandemic.^[4] In summary, the adverse impact of COVID-19 on people's psychological well-being presents an opportunity for a revolution in mental health toward positive well-being.

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Conflicts of interest

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