Plan Overview

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Title: Cross-cultural understandings of mental health and wellbeing among adolescents: An international comparative study applying a bio-ecological perspective

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Project abstract:

The World Health Organisation reports that one in seven adolescents experiences mental health condition and projects that in the coming years, one in two adolescents will have experienced a mental illness at some stage of their life course. A significant percentage of mental illness arise during adolescence, persisting into adulthood and resulting in developmental, social, and economic outcomes.

Mental health research trends pertaining to adolescent mental health primarily focus on health-seeking behaviour and interventions aimed at health promotion. Evidence regarding understandings, beliefs, and attitudes among adolescents on a global scale is limited and even more so when it comes to Sub-Saharan Africa. There is little attention within the literature given to adolescent mental health understandings and the comparisons of mental health understandings across different cultures and how they affect adolescent mental health and wellbeing.

This study intends to identify cultural factors that influence adolescent mental health understandings and explore young people's perspectives on the determinants of child and adolescent mental health. It will explore cultural differences in adolescent mental health understandings and experiences, collaborate with adolescents to produce a classification system for child and adolescent mental health and its determinants and develop a set of indicators based on the classification system to guide the development of interventions for adolescent mental health globally.

The study will involve conducting primary research utilising qualitative tools. A purposive sampling method would be used to facilitate access to adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 years old from Kenya and Nigeria. Primary data will be collected via in-depth interviews and focus groups with the purpose of cocreating research with young people. Literature suggests that different levels of an adolescent's interactions can impact their mental health; therefore, the bioecological theory will be utilised as a framework for analysing the data collected. This is to allow for an in-depth exploration of the variables and the extent of their influence on adolescent mental health outcomes.

Gaining cross-cultural perspectives on adolescent mental health and well-being is invaluable for informing and developing interventions to meet their unique needs. it is also important to ascertain adolescent awareness of their mental health needs and the support available, as it can significantly improve and facilitate help-seeking and utilisation of support from available services.

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Cross-cultural understandings of mental health and wellbeing among adolescents: An international comparative study applying a bio-ecological perspective

Assessment of existing data

Provide an explanation of the existing data sources that will be used by the research project, with references

This project is based on evidence that applying Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory for exploring adolescent mental health can show how adolescents' development is deeply embedded in intersecting cultural systems, which promote and restrict adolescents and, in turn, influence their mental health. Peng et al. (2019) and Lereya et al. (2016) also report that educational settings such as schools play a vital role in shaping adolescent mental health problems in adolescents. However, they can also encounter harmful school experiences such as bullying, which increases the risk of negative mental health behaviours such as self-harm and suicidal ideation and can aggravate adolescent mental health. At the macrosystem level, policies that promote mental health, such as mental health education, are vital for enhancing health-seeking behaviour and utilisation of support for adolescent mental health. Conversely, the disregard for children's rights and lack of laws around child labour in parts of sub-Saharan Africa enable experiences such as hawking and exploitation, exposing them to risk factors which in turn influence their mental health negatively (Osaiyuwu, Burch and Sandu, 2021). Atilola (2017) infers a need for utilising Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory in exploring adolescent mental health in sub-Saharan Africa in order to gain an understanding and contextually appropriate policy directions on environmental influences. Hence, reinforcing the need for this cross-cultural study on adolescent mental health.

Provide an analysis of the gaps identified between the currently available and required data for the research

As this is a novel project, I will be the first to investigate several aspects of this project. These include applying the bioecological perspective to examine adolescent mental health understandings. Adolescent mental health trends primarily focus on health-seeking behaviour and interventions aimed at health promotion (Mustapha, 2025; Wang et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2020). Evidence regarding understandings, beliefs and attitudes among adolescents on a global scale is limited, especially within the context of sub-Saharan Africa (Hassler et al., 2024; Beckman et al., 2023). There is little attention within the literature given to adolescent mental health understandings across different cultures and how these affect adolescent mental health and wellbeing. This is of significance as data shows that there are over 3000 ethnic groups in sub-Saharan Africa with diverse customs, languages and norms (Adebayo et al., 2024), indicating that adolescent experiences would differ across these cultural groups. Hence, addressing adolescent mental health from a cultural perspective is fundamental in tackling the inequalities faced by adolescents in these underserved communities, and two Sub-Saharan countries, Kenya and Nigeria, have been chosen for the study. Previous work in Sub-Saharan Africa has examined how social capital affects mental health but only in adults. Therefore, primary data collection is necessary.

Information on new data

Provide information on the data that will be produced or accessed by the research project

This project will interview adolescents about their understandings, perceptions and experiences regarding their mental health. It will also involve a focus group discussion, building on the findings from the interviews on adolescent views on mental health determinants. Therefore, there will be anonymised interview transcripts made available on Open Science Framework.

Quality assurance of data

Describe the procedures for quality assurance that will be carried out on the data collected at the time of data collection, data entry, digitisation and data checking.

All the procedures for data collection will be documented. It will also be reported in academic, peer-reviewed journal articles that will allow other researchers to replicate the study. They will also have raw data available on Open Science Framework so that the research process is transparent and replicable.

Backup and security of data

Describe the data security and backup procedures you will adopt to ensure the data and metadata are securely stored during the lifetime of the project.

All data will be stored on a private, study-specific MS Teams site accessible only to the researcher and their doctoral supervisors.

Management and curation of data

Outline your plans for preparing, organising and documenting data.

All data will be made available on Open Science Framework following completion of the project. A glossary of terms will be provided to aid the interpretation of the data when needed as well as the lead researchers' contact details should anyone wish to contact them with any queries relating to the data or analysis.

Difficulties in data sharing and measures to overcome these

Identify any potential obstacles to sharing your data, explain which and the possible measures you can apply to overcome these.

Firstly, participants have until a month after taking part in the study to request the withdrawal of their data. If they do so, then their data will be deleted immediately without having to give a reason for doing so, and their data will not be analysed and, in turn, shared on Open Science Framework.

Secondly, participants disclose something we deem too personal during interviews or information that makes an individual identifiable. The research team will make every effort to anonymise the participant, but if we cannot, their data will not be shared.

Consent, anonymisation and strategies to enable further re-use of data

Make explicit mention of the planned procedures to handle consent for data sharing for data obtained from human participants, and/or how to anonymise data, to make sure that data can be made available and accessible for future scientific research.

In the participant information sheets and consent forms, it will be made explicit that data will be anonymised and shared as research outputs. The data has the potential to develop a classification system for understanding adolescent mental health and to close the knowledge gap in this research area. Therefore, the data should and will be retained and preserved so it is usable in subsequent studies as secondary data. Once uploaded to Open Science Framework, this data will be freely available for further research.

Copyright and intellectual property ownership

State who will own the copyright and IPR of any new data that you will generate.

The data will be the intellectual property of both the researcher and Glasgow Caledonian University.

Responsibilities

Outline responsibilities for data management within research teams at all partner institutions

The lead researcher will be responsible for the data that comes from this project.

Preparation of data for sharing and archiving

Are the plans for preparing and documenting data for sharing and archiving with the UK Data Service appropriate?

This data will be available on Open Science Framework where researchers will have access to it.

Is there evidence that data will be well documented during research to provide highquality contextual information and/or structured metadata for secondary users?

The method of data collection will be reported in academic peer-reviewed journal articles. This will also include sampling, data collection and analysis.